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## 'Dangerous Creatures': Selected children's versions of Homer's *Odyssey* in English 1699-2014

### Abstract

This thesis considers how the *Odyssey* was adapted for children, as a specific readership, in English literature 1699-2014. It thus traces both the emergence of children's literature as a publishing category and the transformation of the *Odyssey* into a tale of adventure – a perception of the *Odyssey* which is still widely accepted today (and not only among children) but which is not, for example, how Aristotle understood the poem. I explore case studies from three different points in the development of children's literature, and in the development of the *Odyssey* as a tale of adventure, and connect them to broader cultural attitudes to children and to classical literature. The first, the successful translation of François Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon's *Les aventures de Télémaque* (*The Adventures of Telemachus*, 1699) illustrates the clash of the *Odyssey* with contemporary discourse on literature and education. I then turn to Charles Lamb's *The Adventures of Ulysses* (1808) – a text that was at the heart of Romantic cultural upheavals and the commercial development of children's literature, and which responded directly to Fénelon. Lamb's work transformed the way the Homeric poem would engage with children by focusing on the fantastic adventures of Odysseus, rather than Telemachus, as Fénelon had done. The nineteenth-century shift in the critical reaction to Lamb's work, and to the notion of reading adventure for recreational purposes, would eventually see *The Adventures of Ulysses* become a foundational text for future generations of *Odysseys* for children, and indeed in the reception of the *Odyssey* more generally (Lamb's version was foundational for Joyce, for example). The final part of the thesis explores how Lamb's influence is still operational in a new generation of texts that use subaltern voices in an apparently antagonistic approach to the poem. The thesis argues that the children's texts considered, which are often treated as marginal, both as classical receptions and as children's literature, need to be brought to the core of classical studies.

**'Dangerous Creatures':  
Selected children's versions of Homer's *Odyssey* in English 1699–2014**

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**2015**

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Finally, to Matty for his long-enduring love and support.

To Eva, and all the books she will read.

*Odyssey, n.*

1. (The name of) one of two great hexametric epic poems of ancient Greece traditionally attributed to Homer (the other being the *Iliad*), which describes the ten years' wanderings of Odysseus (Ulysses) on his way home to Ithaca after the fall of Troy.
2. In extended use (freq. with lower-case initial): a long series of wanderings; a long adventurous journey. Also fig.

*(Oxford English Dictionary Online, 2014)*



## Introduction

‘The books offered to me in my childhood left out the adult world, and even when they didn’t, entirely, they never presented adults as children really see them...They were never the uncertain, awkward, quirky, *dangerous* creatures that I knew adults to be. Since it was the adults who had written these books, it was reasonable to assume that they didn’t want to give themselves away; show themselves to us children, to their enemies as they really were.’

Nina Bawden (author of *Carrie’s War*), 1974: 7

Odysseus’ self-narrated encounters with fantastic characters, such as Polyphemus the Cyclops, the Sirens, Circe, Scylla, Charybdis, and the Lotus Eaters, form the most prominent parts of the versions of the *Odyssey* for children: collectively these episodes of the poem have long held a powerful imaginative appeal, having been emphatically differentiated from the rest of the *Odyssey* by generations of authors, editors, and critics who publish for children. However, as Nina Bawden remarks, we should be aware, if not sceptical, of the motivations of the adults behind these versions of the poem: for in their writing they are not showing either the *Odyssey* or themselves as they really are. For classicists, significant consequences arise in the evolution of these versions: the reception of the *Odyssey* in these works is not only primarily responsible for the association of the *Odyssey* with adventure, but, as the dictionary definition relates, the idea that the *Odyssey* is most primarily concerned with ‘the ten years’ wanderings of Odysseus’. Yet the portions of the narrative that might be categorized as Odysseus’ adventures constitute less than one third of the poem. This thesis traces the way in which children’s literary versions of the *Odyssey* have fundamentally contributed to this privileging of the adventure episodes of the Homeric epic in a wider context: an understanding that continues to persist in the popular imagination despite (apparently) radical attempts to reframe the poem.

Classical reception in children’s literature is a new field of study. This thesis is contemporary with the first extended publications on the subject, which are due for publication imminently: first monographs and edited volumes on Classics and children’s literature are being prepared for publication,<sup>1</sup> whilst several international conferences

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<sup>1</sup> Most notably a forthcoming monograph by Sheila Murnaghan and Deborah Roberts on Classics and childhood, as well as forthcoming edited volumes by Helen Lovatt and Owen Hodkinson (*Changing the*

and conference panels have taken place in the last five years.<sup>2</sup> The fast-growing developments in the area are the result of a realisation by classicists that children's versions of classical myths are potentially the only direct exposure to classical literary works that many people will ever have, which means the study of children's versions presents a real opportunity to locate a primary filter for the understanding of the classical past by readers today. Further still, these texts are often first literary encounters with the classical past for those children who do grow up to be classicists, and their pervasiveness means that classical scholars need to be aware of the formative influence that these early encounters hold. Such studies have been enabled primarily by scholars of classical reception; but the development of classical studies of children's literature has also been influenced by related areas of scholarship, such as classics and pedagogy, and studies of classical encounters in subaltern or marginalised groups. In turn, such areas of scholarship are likely to benefit one another.<sup>3</sup>

By taking up the study of classical themes in children's literature, there is also a real opportunity to address significant gaps in studies of English literature and children's literature. In the past two decades, calls from both fields have encouraged the study of the Homeric poems for the young: Steiner 1996: xxxiv, in his collection *Homer in English*, remarks that 'More space could have been found for the long tradition of 'Homers for the young', of which Charles Lamb's retelling of the *Odyssey* is an enchanting example'. Frequently, versions of the *Odyssey* for children are assumed to be abbreviated but ultimately 'faithful' versions – though as Goldhill 2007: 245–6 argues, this is highly problematic for a poem that has accrued such different and contradictory

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*Greeks and Romans: Metamorphosing Antiquity for Children*, Cambridge University Press, 2015), and a volume edited by Lisa Maurice (*Heroes and Eagles: the Reception of Ancient Greece and Rome in Children's Literature*, Brill, 2015).

<sup>2</sup> Hodkinson and Lovatt were the co-organizers of the first dedicated conference on classics and children's literature ('Asterisks and Obelisks: Greece and Rome in Children's Literature') in 2009 at the University of Lampeter (now Trinity St. David), whilst a second international conference was held in 2013 at the Faculty of Artes Liberales at the University of Warsaw ('Our Mythical Childhood'). There were two panels on classics and children's literature at the April 2013 Classical Association conference at the University of Reading, and also a panel, at the University of Leeds' July 2013 conference 'Hercules – A Hero for All Ages'. There have also been conferences that have been concerned with practical questions of how children relate to the classical world, such as the University of Oxford's 'Classics in Communities' conference in November 2013.

<sup>3</sup> Classics and pedagogy has become an increasingly important scholarly topic in recent years: Christopher Stray's authoritative work *Classics Transformed* (1998) outlined the metamorphosis of classical studies from culture to discipline, and the isolation of classical studies in the curriculum is particularly topical. Feminist and post-colonial studies in classics and classical reception are now well established, and projects such as Edith Hall's 'Classics and Class' are attempting to spread interest into other unrepresented voices.

interfaces in the modern world. With a protagonist renowned for his multi-faceted nature ('Ἄνδρα...πολύτροπον' *Od.* 1.1), the *Odyssey* cannot be unproblematic, and the mechanics of negotiating around this fact are brought into the spotlight by children's literature. Reception studies, Goldhill argues, have tended to 'assume a passive or necessary receptivity of an audience, uniformity of comprehension, and unidirectional transmission of unified meaning' (2007: 267). Children's literature studies, which have faced the same criticism, serve as an effective arena in which to explode these understandings of both fields. By exploring the process of writing versions of the *Odyssey* for children, we can see how the assumptions outlined are not the reality of either discipline.

Classical reception studies have evolved away from issues of textual fidelity (Hardwick 2003: 111–2 calls it 'no longer a defining criterion'), but the idea of fidelity is still relevant and fruitful in relation to children's literature. The trust in this notion of fidelity has meant that the interpretation of the Homeric poem for a young audience has remained largely underexplored, though explorations of children's literature are being made in other fields, such as medieval studies, where scholars are taking on similar treatments of Norse epic.<sup>4</sup> One notable exception is an attempt to theorise the study of the reworking of traditional material for children – John Stephens and Robyn McCallum's 1998 *Retelling Stories, Framing Culture* – which serves as an important grounding for this thesis: indeed, this work has significantly contributed to a new space in which versions of traditional material for children can be reassessed as independent works with a hypotext, rather than faithful or unfaithful replications. Yet despite its coverage of Biblical stories, Beowulf, Arthurian epic, and even some classical myths, Homeric epic was not covered – and, as a review of the work by Gillian Adams 2001: 227 notes, as an omission it is keenly felt. Homeric epic appears to be perceived differently amongst scholars writing about it in relation to children's literature. Non-classicists are able to explore 'classical myth' and its reinterpretation for children, and scholars write confidently about myths such as Icarus and the sun,<sup>5</sup> or about Oedipus, if undertaking psychoanalytic studies,<sup>6</sup> but the Homeric poems are frequently kept distinct, despite their own role as the definitive propagators of numerous mythic

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<sup>4</sup> David Clark at the University of Leicester is working on medieval literature – especially Icelandic epic and Norse mythology, in children's literature.

<sup>5</sup> See Stephens & McCallum 1998: 69–76.

<sup>6</sup> The most notable example being the controversial *The Uses of Enchantment* by Bruno Bettelheim (1976).

characters. The impetus to write about the Homeric poems for children is being left to classicists by scholars from other fields – and as classicists are only just beginning to address children’s literature, let alone the Homeric poems specifically, the potential of the topic is considerable. As a result, the pathways with which the topic can be explored are numerous and require careful navigation in terms of scope and the form of texts covered. Still, even setting out the scope of the thesis historically and in terms of range of materials, it is important first to locate the position of my arguments in relation to children and children’s literature.

## Children and childhood

‘Childhood’, ‘children’ and ‘children’s literature’ are interrelated terms that have made up some of the most vocal discourse in the study of children’s literature, and require careful consideration. The *Odyssey* can be used to illustrate the problems with these definitions: although the poem was not composed specifically for a child audience in antiquity, and is read by adults today, it has been replicated for children for centuries. The question of these readers and their childhoods is problematic. Beginning with ‘childhood’, in the temporal sense of the period when one is considered to be a child, the understanding of this term is shaped today predominantly by legal and social institutions. Issues of political enfranchisement and representation such as the voting age, or the age of sexual consent, are not without controversy for their written authority, being frequently challenged by adults and children alike, but they are formal representations of what it means to be an adult (and implicitly, a child). Since the introduction of compulsory education, progress through the school system has become another marker of the ending of childhood. However, this thesis is neither a history of childhood,<sup>7</sup> nor an account of how children’s literature has been incorporated into formal learning. As such, institutional definitions are not flexible enough to recognize shifting understandings of childhood, and in particular the recreational experience of those defined as children.

Rather, an approach that recognizes the fluidity of formalized definitions across different eras is necessary. Philippe Ariès’ 1960 work, *Centuries of Childhood* has been the most enduring (and controversial) academic influence on the conception of

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<sup>7</sup> For an extensive literature review of histories of children and childhood, see Margaret L. King 2007.

childhood: in it, he argues that childhood as we understand it is a relatively modern notion, and traces the development in attitudes towards, and the experiences of children from the Early Modern era to the modern day. Ariès' work is often treated as a history of childhood, and the controversies surrounding his work are often rooted in claims about specific eras: Pollock 1983 is one of numerous critics who interpreted Ariès as claiming there was no such thing as childhood in the medieval period, in terms of having a distinct attitude towards it. Cunningham 1998: 1197 argued that much of the critical scholarship against Ariès had focused on the mistranslation of the word *sentiment*, which had meant that this criticism was fallacious, but in the long term, the critical attention has been damaging. Cunningham's defence seems to be part of a more positive assessment in recent years, and whilst acknowledging the weaknesses in Ariès method and conclusions, the pervasive influence of Ariès led Schultz (1995: 9) to make the case for the 'historicity of childhood' – the idea that childhood is reflective of contemporary cultural conventions, and not simply biological or other criteria. It is a position that resonates strongly with Hardwick's (2003: 111–2) call for classical reception studies to a focus on 'horizontal' receptions in a given period. The position of Schultz allows for a discussion of childhood as predominantly a cultural entity – whether childhood ends at thirteen, sixteen, or eighteen,<sup>8</sup> adults have consistently recognized childhood as a period of life where young people have needed particular guidance, and children's literature has acted as crucial medium for this communication between generations. This flexibility is supported by the fact that whilst the texts the thesis explores might be understood today to be 'for' a young person of a particular age, children have always read works outside those specifically aimed at them, and adults have always formed part of the readership of children's literature: to compare only those works in particular modern categories would be, at worst, arbitrary and anachronistic.

Instead, we can focus on the practices of those who have invested themselves in children's literature and their relationship with their audience. In order show the *Odyssey* as an 'active presence' (Hardwick 2003: 111) in children's literature, Hardwick argues we can explore the question of 'what difference was made' as this covers 'both the practices of the appropriator or agent of refiguration in relation to the source text or

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<sup>8</sup> Only recently has adolescence become a demarcated period within childhood, as the concept continues to culturally evolve. See end of this section.

idea and additionally the impact on the receiving culture or tradition'. In retellings of the *Odyssey* for children (where we often assume that the intended audience is hearing the story for the first time), the relationship between what Hardwick calls the 'agent of refiguration' and their audience describes, on a primary level, the relationship between adult and child. There are modern examples of collaborative published efforts written jointly by adults and children,<sup>9</sup> but all published versions of the *Odyssey* in English to date have been written at least nominally by adults, and though modern authors are choosing to receive increasing amounts of input from children (or at any rate, choosing to acknowledge it), it is the adult who primarily shapes the text. However, other agents also have a role to play: editors, critics, and other invested adult presences all play active roles in the refiguration of the poem for children. The 'receiving culture' (i.e. children) is more difficult to pin down, as neither the individuals who make up this culture nor the literature produced for their benefit are easily defined, or easily represented.

The question of the child in children's literature is closely bound-up with the definition of children's literature itself, causing the act of categorization to become a complex enterprise. The central tension can be broadly described as between two camps, which Marah Gubar 2011: 210 outlines as follows: those who envisage children's literature as a definable genre (Gubar calls the 'definists'), and those who do not (the 'antidefinists'). This is not to include all scholars in one camp or the other, but two groups represent the positions which until very recently have been dominant. The first group, in which Gubar includes scholars such as Perry Nodelman (1985, 2008) and Myles McDowell (1973), takes the position that children's literature is a distinct genre, with its own specific characteristics. Even where the territory of children's literature becomes less clear, it does not mean that some texts are not obviously children's literature. The second group, which includes Jacqueline Rose (1984), John Rowe Townsend (1980), and Karín Lesnik-Oberstein (1994), amongst others, has denied the possibility of defining children's literature because of the lack of a real child at the heart of these texts. These three scholars all take issue with the role of the child in children's literature: Townsend argues that the term falsely suggests that children are in control of this body of texts that are produced by adults. Children, he argues, are not a separate

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<sup>9</sup> e.g. Zizou Corder's *Lion Boy* series – Zizou Corder being the pseudonym of mother-and-daughter writing team Louise Young and Isabel Adomakoh Young.

form of person and should not be categorized differently as a result (1980: 197). Rose and Lesnik-Oberstein both deny the existence of a specific 'children's literature' and the child implied within it: children are not a group who can be unilaterally addressed. Rose makes a famous claim that children's literature is 'impossible' because the child and children's literature are figments in the imagination of adults in the process of writing. *The Case of Peter Pan, or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* argues that the child is a fictional construct of the author: 'Children's fiction rest on the idea that there is a child who is simply there to be addressed and that speaking to it might be simple...Children's fiction sets up a world in which the adult comes first (author, maker, giver) and the child comes after (reader product, receiver), but where neither of them enter the space in between...Children's fiction sets up the child as an outsider to its own process, and then aims, unashamedly, to take the child *in*' (1993: 1-2). In relation to this thesis, neither position seems to be wholly satisfactory: the *Odyssey*, whilst featuring many features which might be thought of to be characteristic of children's literature, was not conceived for this specific audience.

In the last five years, the critical landscape has shifted, and Marah Gubar has made a convincing argument that the focus on the definition of children's literature is limiting the field as a whole. The *Odyssey* and other traditional poems and stories raise significant problems for definists, for the desire to define children's literature has meant that significant areas of material are ruled 'out of bounds' (Gubar 2011: 211). Maria Nikolajeva 1996: 42-3 has excluded folktales, fairy tales, and "classics" such as the *Arabian Nights* and *Robinson Crusoe* from the body of texts which she is willing to study as children's literature, not just the original versions but, Gubar 2011: 211 notes, 'even those editions that were simplified and sanitized for young readers - on the grounds that they were not originally created for children, as if no amount of adaptation could transform an adult-oriented text into children's literature'. Whilst she recognises (2009: 33) that Rose's questions about who are children's authors writing for and why remain relevant today, Gubar suggests that the bi-partisan approach to definition has gone on too long, and has proposed an alternative. She argues that 'a productive middle ground exists between the extreme positions adopted by the definers and antidefiners': a ground which moves away from approaches which tend either to generalize adults as permanently fashioning children into a state of innocence or children as being fundamentally different from adults in their thoughts and resistant to them. This third

ground takes a more open and inclusive view: she uses Wittgenstein's term 'family resemblance' to describe how we might link literary work which children have access to, including literature of different purposes (e.g. children's plays). Rather than seeing the process of writing for children as one of colonization, Gubar suggests that we can acknowledge the 'tremendous power that adults and their texts have over young people, whilst still allowing for the possibility that children – immersed from birth in a sea of discourse – can nevertheless navigate through this arena of competing currents in diverse and unexpected ways' (2009: 32–3). This third approach helps us begin to reconcile the roles of the *Odyssey* as canonical text and as children's literature, recognising that the *Odyssey* and versions for children can play an active influence on the next generation, whilst acknowledging the potential for children to access and desire to interact with narratives not originally created for them. Most importantly, the possibility of the child's mastery of the discourse of children's literature, from an early age, suggests the potential for a child to be aware of the differences between texts written specifically for them, and the existence of the canonical pre-text, even when this is not entirely explicit.

Gubar is one of a number of voices who have called on a more 'child-centric' criticism of children's literature since the 1980s, which was led by Peter Hunt (1991: 191) – and whilst these critics are right not to limit themselves entirely to the discussion of adult ideas, not only is it problematic to attempt to pinpoint the reaction of the 'child' and make it representative of 'children' as a whole (as Rowe Townsend argues 1980: 200), but these scholars have generally worked on texts which have a child protagonist. This means that the question of a child-centric approach is concerned with children reading themselves in some form, in a narrative that attempts to emulate or imagine the experiences and reactions of children.<sup>10</sup> The *Odyssey* does not have such a protagonist: Telemachus is young, but on the cusp of manhood – an adolescent. Moreover, he is not the protagonist and the poem as a whole is not focalized through him. Yet this has not prevented some adults from encouraging both younger child readers and teenage readers to identify with Telemachus. This is despite the fact, as it

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<sup>10</sup> Apart from the chronology of the project, which is outlined in the next section, one historical issue is the representation of children: the sources we have for piecing together children's responses to reading are limited before the twentieth-century and in relation to a specific text such as the *Odyssey* even more so (at least in the voice of children themselves, though there are of course, adult recollections of early reading – those who have adapted the *Odyssey* for children have frequently pinpointed their own childhood reading as the *raison d'être* for their work).



has been argued by Wissmann 2009: 448–9 that ancient readers did not appear to exploit him as a role model, as they were more interested in the adult product of education; in any case, the papyri show that the *Iliad*, rather than the *Odyssey*, dominated in the school curriculum. The idea of Telemachus as suitable protagonist for children to emulate would develop centuries later, when pedagogues drew on this model.

The boundaries between literature for children and adolescents, children and adults, and adolescents and adults, are blurred – what Hardwick might recognize as ‘fautline[s]’ (2007: 50): sites of strain between cultures. The *Odyssey* is a text that has operated precisely on these fautlines, and the nature of its reception means that adult discourse has been dominant, and therefore cannot be avoided. The particular distinction made between childhood and adolescence has only been made formally in the past half-century. Some of the texts explored in this thesis could be classified as young adult literature (hereafter referred to as YA literature): however, like many publications for this market, they were printed under the ‘children’s literature’ imprint of a publisher, whilst their press reviews advertise or recommend it for a slightly older age group.<sup>11</sup> As with children’s literature, the term, ‘young adult literature’ fiction seems to imply a recognizable audience, and arguments have been made (notably in Waller’s 2009 *Constructing Adolescence in Fantastic Realism*) that young adult literature needs to be defined and theorized separately because of its ingrained liminality. Michael Cart voices the opposing argument:

‘Whatever happens, the field is in flux: but then, it always has been, and why not? For what is adolescence but a state of continuous change – of becoming, not being. For that reason alone, I believe the best definition of ‘young adult literature’ will be the least specific one. And frankly, since it is such a function of our ever-changing ideas of and attitudes towards adolescence, I’m not sure we need a formal definition.’ (1996: 11)

YA literature is subject to the same issues of definition as children’s literature: however, Gubar’s acknowledgement of both the power of adults and ability to navigate texts of young people is fluid enough to allow a meaningful discussion of both children’s and

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<sup>11</sup> For example, concerning one of the works explored in the final part of the thesis: the US publishers of *Ithaka*, Scholastic, list it as for ‘Grade 9–12’ (ages 14–18) on their website, whilst *The Bookette* review blog (2010) list it as suitable for 12 year olds and over.

young adult literature with acknowledgement of intended audiences: recognizing both those who would argue that YA literature is a separate entity, and those who see it as a sub-genre of children's literature. My use of the term 'children's literature' throughout this thesis is inclusive of this adolescent readership, just as 'child' will be used to refer to the intended non-adult reader, precisely because of these blurred definitions. This is not meant to undermine those calls for a specific criticism for modern YA literature, but this term, along with 'adolescent' are so relatively modern, they cannot easily be applied retrospectively to the chronological range of this project.

Gubar's model of working opens up new ground for not only scholars of children's literature but all literary disciplines because of its inclusivity: however, a child-centric criticism in relation to traditional literature overlooks some of the key dynamics in its transmission and reception. The relationship that is outlined in the course of the thesis – between adults, children and ancient literature – is triangular, even if we cannot fully realise the relationship between the last two: the role of the *Odyssey* as 'adult' text is a fundamental part of the motivations of children's versions. Most of all, to focus on a child-based approach says nothing about the dynamics of the way in which the 'adult' poem of the *Odyssey* is 'preserved' and presented to the younger generation, because of the burden of cultural responsibility that comes with it: in this sense, it is not time yet to abandon studies of adults' investment in children's literature, but instead to ask the same questions of different disciplines.

## Chronology and Definitions

The vast scope of published material that has the potential to be included in a discussion of the *Odyssey* in children's literature means that the first task is to identify the material that gives us the best opportunity to produce a cohesive study. The diversity of formats means that versions are not easily comparable: to focus the discussion, a series of distinctions need to be made in order to characterise the texts under consideration here.

The first distinction is the language of the texts explored: they are all in the English language, and discussion of them focuses on their reception in England. This enables close inspection of how different versions respond to each other, as well as the *Odyssey*, and helps to highlight the particular ability of English language children's

literature to operate transnationally, and the importance of internationalism in developments in children's literature. Exchanges of literature between England and other countries have been on-going from the earliest stages of children's literature. This does not necessarily mean that authors of the works themselves are English: indeed, the thesis begins by examining a text originally written in French – François Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon's *Les aventures de Télémaque* (*The Adventures of Telemachus*). The English translation of this text would prove hugely significant in its own right, both in its timing, at a crucial point in the development of children's literature, and in how it shaped the *Odyssey* for future generations of children reading in English.

The publication date of this translation – 1699 – serves as the second distinction, the chronological point of departure: it marks the beginning of the *Odyssey* as recreational reading for children. First written for a specific and prestigious young pupil, Fénelon's work was published at a time when a widespread, accessible literature produced specifically for children was not yet available. Formal pedagogical material can be found dating back to antiquity e.g. dictionaries, commentaries, exercises, and selected extracts, as explored in broader studies of education in the ancient world by Morgan (1998), Criboire (1996, 2001, 2009) and Joyal, Yardley and McDougall (2009), among others. Early examples of literature for children have been dated back to the 1400s<sup>12</sup> in English, but recreational literature specifically aimed at children starts to become more commonplace through the late 1600s and early 1700s.<sup>13</sup> Supported by the increase of children as a proportion of the population and the subsequent growth in educational provision (Kinnell 1995: 29–31), and an investment in publishing technology both financially and culturally (especially developments in paper quality) (Kinnell 1996: 141–2), children's literature started to become a commodity, and one which was readily available at a variety of prices. This provided reading material for the increasingly literate working classes, but at the same time meant a range of quality of material could be stratified by price for the middle and upper classes. These commercial developments laid part of the foundations for children's literature to flourish in the late eighteenth century. This thesis does not explore formal educational literary materials

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<sup>12</sup> Grenby 2009: 4 gives the examples of William Caxton's *The Book of Curtesye* (1477), Francis Seager's *Schoole of Vertue and Booke of Good Nourture for Chyldren, and Youth to Learn Theyr Dutie By* (1557).

<sup>13</sup> Grenby 2009: 4 gives the examples of Thomas Boreman's *Description of Three Hundred Animals* (1730), the works of Mary and Thomas Cooper (1742 onwards), John Newman's *A Pretty Little Pocket-Book* (1744). Newman founded his own children's book business, proving that such ventures could be a commercial success.

(those materials produced exclusively for an institutional, or formal learning environment), but tensions between didactic and recreational agendas are central to this newfound literature designed with the primary purpose of recreation and pleasure.

Fénelon's creation was contemporary with new theories that explicitly combined pedagogical and recreational ideas. Pedagogical theory was overhauled in the seventeenth century, as Chilton 1997: xxi notes: 'Prompted by the ferment over Descartes's *Discourse on Method* (1637), theories of education had evolved from a focus on religious-based instruction to more humanist concerns. Philosophers wrote elaborate treatises on methods of improving education, asserting that children should learn at a pace commensurate with their ages and abilities and that learning should be made enjoyable'. The child-centric ideas that underpinned this renovation in pedagogy were most famously embodied in John Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* of 1693. With greater concern for children's learning and recreation came greater scrutiny over the contents of pre-existing literature, and the adventures of the *Odyssey* would play a definitive role in the way subsequent generations would approach the Homeric poem. Ariès' description of the process makes this transformation appear to be very sudden, with the sea-change resulting from the actions of 'certain pedagogues', with weighty ideas, managing to domineer educational discourse by barring children from reading 'indecent' books. He describes how 'the idea originated of providing expurgated editions of the classics for the use of children. This was a very important stage, which may be regarded as marking the beginning of respect for childhood. This attitude was to be found among both Catholics and Protestants, in France and England. Until then nobody had hesitated to give children Terence to read, for he was a classic' (1996: 107). Whatever the reality behind Ariès' comment concerning Terence, it is hardly true across the rest of the classical canon, for the Homeric poems had come under close scrutiny as to their moral benefit since antiquity (as explored in Part I) – but he does highlight an important issue: classical literature played a crucial role in the reshaping of literature for children, by confronting head-on the new ideas concerning instructive literature for the young.

The legacy of this innovation upon the *Odyssey* for children is explored in Parts II, III and IV. Parts II and III examine the role of Charles Lamb's *The Adventures of Ulysses* as the first version of the poem to have been presented as an adventure-driven story. In terms of narrative structure, register, focus, and imaginative stimulus, Lamb's version of

the *Odyssey* saw the poem fundamentally transformed for a young audience. It was a work created in direct response to Fénelon, but also one that sentimentalized Lamb's own childhood reading. Yet upon publication, Lamb was heavily criticized for his focus on the spectacles of the *Odyssey* and not its moral core. It would not be until the second half of the nineteenth century that Lamb's work would not only be reassessed, but exalted, as a result of the rise of imperial literature. By investigating a range of literature from this later period, the transformation in the reception of Lamb reflects a new reception of the *Odyssey*, where adventure is both recreationally and *didactically* admired. Finally, Part IV moves forward a century to explore direct challenges to this nineteenth-century narrative of adventure as education. It examines three twenty-first century reversions of the *Odyssey* which explore the poem from the perspectives of a young handmaiden to Penelope, a Trojan slave on Odysseus' ship, and Telemachus. It demonstrates how the Romantic legacy of Lamb not only survives, but continues actively to shape the presentation of the *Odyssey* in works which superficially appear to seek to shake off the authority of the poem. Lamb's influence became trans-Atlantic, as reflected in the Canadian origins of two of these texts: as his version is held as paradigm, these modern children's texts allow us to ask questions of our own primary understanding of the Homeric poem. This chronological outline leads to a third distinction: this is not a history of children's literature, or of any one of the individual periods explored, but it does offer a historical case study. By examining the position of the *Odyssey* as children's literature in three distinct periods, we can evaluate how the reshaping of the text has moulded our own experience of the Homeric poem today. The strangeness of the adventures of the *Odyssey* when adapted for children is best illustrated by this broader chronological approach, challenging our understanding of the poem both as children's literature itself, and through the lens of children's literature.

As a fourth distinction, we cannot call the works explored 'retellings', as they do not seek to mimic the *Odyssey* as it is, and more importantly, they claim different relationships with the Homeric poem. Similarly, the term 'adaptation', according to one *Oxford English Dictionary Online* definition, is 'The action or process of altering, amending, or modifying something, esp. something that has been created for a particular purpose, so that it suitable for a new use' (2015): children's authors may be repurposing the *Odyssey* in their own works, but many authors claim that they are not 'altering, amending, or modifying' the poem, but instead 'writing around' the poem (as

Adèle Geras claims in the preface to *Ithaka*). The term 'adaptation' does not recognize the dynamism and variety of the engagement with the *Odyssey*. As this thesis unfolds, the strategies employed by children's authors to balance issues of pedagogy and recreation become apparent – we see these authors struggle with how to reconcile their own agendas to the contemporary reception of the *Odyssey*, regardless of the period. Fénelon's work, for example, claims to fill in a gap in the *Odyssey*, rather than repeat the Homeric narrative, but revisits locations and characters from the Homeric poem (much like the *Posthomerica*, but also reflecting the intertextual strategies of the ancient world more broadly, as demonstrated by Ovid's *Heroides*, Statius' *Achilleid*, and Apollonius' *Argonautica*). Lamb's work is characterised by a response to Fénelon, and not just the *Odyssey*, though it recounts a form of the Odyssean narrative; another nineteenth-century publication sees the *Odyssey* as a means of engaging with the Bible; and the most recent texts seek to undermine the Homeric poem by exploiting fissures in the original text. There are texts that might appear to be a 'faithful' retelling of the Homeric narrative (though on the difficulties of using this term see above p. 8–9), but these are often prefaced with a note from the author, who hopes that their young audiences will go on to read the poem when they are older – admitting that their work, in some way, is not the *Odyssey*.<sup>14</sup> As a result, for the most part, the texts examined in this thesis are referred to not as adaptations, but as an alternative neutral term, 'versions': these texts engage with the *Odyssey*, but in a form delivered in accordance with an individual vision. Those texts, like the twenty-first century narratives that do not seek to imitate the Homeric narrative, but instead create what Stephens and McCallum 1998:4 describe as a narrative that has 'taken apart its pre-texts and reassembled them as a version which is a new textual and ideological configuration', 'reversions'. These texts are antagonistic – they draw the original hypotext into question, and suggest an alternate narrative to the reality of the hypotext. This is why Fénelon's work, which is an original reconfiguration of classical pre-texts, cannot be called a reversion – as the next section explores, despite the novelty of his narrative, he does not seek to destabilize or undermine the authority of the Homeric poem. Of course, readers may have differing opinions as to what an author is trying to achieve with a particular work, but the terms 'version' and 'reversion' allow us to describe the contrasting surface presentations of the texts under discussion.

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<sup>14</sup> e.g. Jeanie Lang's *Stories from the Odyssey* (1906).

Finally, following issues of language and origin, and of chronology and definition, there are some more straightforward distinctions to be made: the first is that the versions of the *Odyssey* in question are prose, rather than poetic versions, as this is the overwhelmingly dominant form of children's versions of the Homeric poem. Second, these prose forms are literary, rather than pictorial. Although they may have been illustrated,<sup>15</sup> the vast majority of the space is given over to the text, and there is no sense that illustrations would be competing with the text as the vehicle for recounting the poem. Third, all of the works included in the scope of this thesis were designed as independent publications in their own right (as opposed to being part of a volume). The exception to this is the use of Victorian periodicals in Part III – but these are used as part of a broader argument about the centrality of Lamb's work, as these articles are not versions of the *Odyssey* themselves. There are many versions of the poem for children that are abbreviated, filling only a few pages in a compilation. Work has already begun on the first area: Deborah Roberts' article on compendia of Greek myth<sup>16</sup> provides a basis for further work on the process of selection for compilation. For the present study, the exploration of the pervasiveness of the adventures of the *Odyssey* in children's literature is better served by the use of texts which have a sustained creative engagement with the full narrative arc of the poem: these versions reveal the challenges and confrontations posed by these episodes when situated in the Homeric poem as a whole.

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In the culmination of the four parts outlined, the widespread effect of the reception of the *Odyssey* through these children's versions is revealed. Hardwick 2007: 50 discusses how Homeric receptions have the potential to 'reveal faultlines within and between cultures...cracks and fissures that from time to time become more prominent and market the impact of powerful shifts in power, practices and paradigms'. The

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<sup>15</sup> Most compendia of classical myth are heavily illustrated, and comic-strip versions such as those by Marcia Wallace have also proved popular. Classical illustrations in children's literature has remained almost untouched as an area of scholarship, and shows significant interdisciplinary potential, and a strong appeal to classicists interested in the reception of classical art. The closest work would be the *Classics and Comics* volume edited by Kovacs and Marshall (2010) which features several articles that explore Homeric depictions in a format between text and image.

<sup>16</sup> (2009) 'From Fairy Tale to Cartoon: Collections of Greek Myth for Children', special issue on 'The Reception of Classical Mythology in Modern Handbooks and Collections'. *Classical Bulletin* 84, pp. 58–73.

*Odyssey* is well-placed to expose the impact that different cultural pressures have upon its reception in children's literature, being a bastion of the Western canon on one hand (and representative of adult culture) and fantastic on the other (which is a common feature of children's culture). Shifts in the landscape of children's literature have left indelible impressions on the *Odyssey*, and vice versa, we can witness these faultlines between adult and child culture under particular strain in relation to the *Odyssey*. The common conception that children's versions of the *Odyssey* are loyal representations of the Homeric poem is made redundant under this tension. Haubold 2007: 45, in discussing the impact of Homer in twentieth-century receptions, argues that 'Homer came to play a decisive role in the on-going project of opening up the canon of 'literature', of rethinking ways in which authors create and audiences read and, most importantly, of how texts speak to other texts across time...Homer in the twentieth century is never simply a matter of selection, imitation and adaptation'. In opening up the canon by adapting the *Odyssey* for children, adults have rewritten the *Odyssey* into its now iconic form: for children, the creation of literary first encounters with Homer has never been a simple process, and the adventures of Odysseus are made strange not only for the fantastic creatures in them, but because of the persistence of the prestige given to such creatures.



## Part I: Fénelon's *The Adventures of Telemachus*

François Salignac de la Mothe-Fénelon's *Les aventures de Télémaque* (*The Adventures of Telemachus*, 1699) was the first text written specifically for a juvenile audience with a basis in the *Odyssey*. The impact of *The Adventures of Telemachus* on the English-speaking world has been described by scholars of comparative literature in dynamic terms: Ahern 2005: 331 calls it the most published French work in English translation during the eighteenth century, tying with Galland's *Thousand and One Nights*, whilst the noted scholar of fairy tales Ruth Bottigheimer (2003: 172) goes further, calling it the single most published children's book throughout the eighteenth century in the English press.<sup>17</sup> It was quickly absorbed into school curricula, becoming 'the standard version of Homer for children for at least the next hundred years' (Hahn 2015: 204) – but it was the innovative recreational nature of its refashioning of the *Odyssey* that gave it the novelty that ensured its eventual success. As illustrated in the Appendix, the scale of influence of the translations of the work is made clear via the sixteen English translations made in the first two centuries of publication (1699–1800), alongside the vast quantity of reprints made in the same period. Today, both Fénelon and his work remain largely overlooked outside academia; yet, intellectually and culturally, *The Adventures of Telemachus* would be the formative version of the Homeric poem for a young audience.

Fénelon's work was not an attempt to retell directly either of the Homeric poems. Whilst Hahn's comment, in light of the title of the work, might imply to classicists a simple retelling of the Telemachy designed for clarity and ease: the reality was a highly referential treatise, both philosophical and political, which was selective in its use of the *Odyssey*, and other classical literature. As a densely intertextual work, its nominal role as a piece of children's literature is alienating to both modern classicists, and non-classicists alike, who struggle to recognise it as a work for its intended audience. This struggle is predicated partly on expectations of children's literature, which has become closely associated with entertainment, fantasy and the imagination (Grenby 2015). Moreover the fact that this is not a direct retelling of the *Odyssey* from start to end clashes with expectation of fidelity or adaptation for children as simplification: Fénelon and, indeed, the other works I discuss, do not fully originate

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<sup>17</sup> Based on her own bibliographical compilations of early English children's literature.

from the *Odyssey* in isolation, either literarily or culturally, and there is no sense of children's versions being handed down and edited consistently until something with the 'essence' of the *Odyssey* which is also 'suitable for children' is produced. Early versions of the poem for children proved significant for the direction of future publications, and provided some direct inspiration and guidance, but as in many other fields of classical reception, children's authors were writing with greater care for the present (and in the case of children, the future) than for the past. Fénelon's didactic work became the first major literary example of the *Odyssey* as children's literature, having been generated in the midst of emerging late seventeenth- and early-eighteenth century debates concerning the value of the ancient and the modern, and the balance of education and the imagination, which questioned the very nature of recreational reading for young audiences, and specifically the role of the *Odyssey* within it. Finally, in addition to the contribution made to the landscape of classical children's literature, *The Adventures of Telemachus* had a particular legacy: Fénelon's work shaped the first adaptation of the *Odyssey* for children which was originated in English – Charles Lamb's *The Adventures of Ulysses* – which itself played a definitive role in the configuration of the *Odyssey* for future generations. As the point of departure, Part I of this thesis outlines the allegorical reading of the *Odyssey* in the Renaissance; Fénelon and the specific origins of his work; *la querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*, and how cultural revolutions of the era positioned the *Odyssey* directly against a type of literature now associated predominantly with childhood; *The Adventures of Telemachus* itself and the limitations of fantasy; and finally, but most crucially, the resultant critical reception of Fénelon in England. By setting up the turn of the eighteenth century as an unfamiliar landscape of children's literature, Lamb's nineteenth-century transformative contribution to the reception of the *Odyssey* becomes even stranger and more pronounced.

#### i. The *Odyssey* in the Renaissance

The proem of the *Odyssey* highlights Odysseus as both a hostile agent and a victim, admirably clever but duplicitous:

"Tell me, Muse, of the man of many ways, who was driven  
far journeys, after he had sacked Troy's sacred citadel.  
Many were they whose cities he saw, whose minds he learned of,

many the pains he suffered in his spirit on the wide sea,  
struggling for his own life and the homecoming of his companions.  
Even so he could not save his companions, hard though  
he strove to; they were destroyed by their own wild recklessness,  
fools, who devoured the oxen of Helios, the Sun God,  
and he took away their homecoming. From some point  
here, goddess, daughter of Zeus, speak, and begin our story.'  
(*Od.* 1.1–10, trans. Lattimore)<sup>18</sup>

Such ambiguity creates a questionable role model for persons of any age. One way of enriching the character of such a man was to shift the focus away from Odysseus' personal responsibility to his experiences, something encouraged by the poem itself, as the opening can also be read as a pre-emptive and mollifying list of deeds: as Strauss Clay 1976: 317; 1997: 38 argues, the poet of the *Odyssey* shifts culpability away from Odysseus, instead focusing on the *atasthaliai* – the reckless actions of his companions. The use of events to counterbalance, or distance, the negative human aspects of Odysseus' character manifested itself significantly in the late Renaissance: through the use of allegory, a substantial defence could be mounted against critics of the poem who drew attention to its inherent moral challenges. For its ability to edify and smooth over existing stories, allegory had a natural appeal to those invested in literature for children: however, the incorporation of allegory into narratives for children was far from straightforward – especially in Fénelon's *The Adventures of Telemachus*.

As a method of reading, allegory was by no means a panacea: problems associated with the obfuscation of meaning, or the inability to draw suitable allegorizations, particularly when it came to young audiences, also had been recognised in classical Greece. Plato *Republic* 2.378d–e outlines passages from Homer that cannot be saved by attempts at alternative readings:

'Hera chained up by her son; the hurling down by his father of Hephaestus, who was attempting to defend his mother who was being beaten up; and such battles of the gods as Homer composed: these are not to be admitted into our state whether they have been composed with a deeper meaning or not. For the young are not able to distinguish what has a deeper meaning and what has not. Whatever opinions they have formed at their age are hard to wash out and usually become unalterable.'<sup>19</sup>

<sup>18</sup> In keeping with the exploration of the *Odyssey* in English, my references to the poem will be from the translation of Richmond Lattimore (1975) – with some references to the Greek for specifics.

<sup>19</sup> Trans. Emlyn-Jones and Preddy 2013: 199–200, adapted.

Whilst the *Republic* is concerned with a greater picture of morality and the constitution of the *polis*, and this passage draws on episodes from the *Iliad*, rather than the *Odyssey*, this passage is nevertheless revealing. Allegory has not been a default method for conveying Homeric ideas to young children, but adult anxiety over the apparent vulnerability of children, and their ability to interpret allegory, has been present from antiquity. The power given to stories for children, and its ability to influence society, was acknowledged long before children had a literature dedicated to them. Moreover, the Homeric poems occupied a precarious position in discourse in this area.

Allegorical readings of the *Odyssey* flourished in late antiquity, with their usage as a method of defence becoming inseparable from the poem itself in later readings (Lamberton 1986: xi). Over time, whilst particular allegorizations remained popular (most notably the equation of the Sirens with wisdom), it was the overarching image of Odysseus' journey that allowed for the flexibility to interpret these episodes as temptations, vices, or different branches of knowledge (as noted by Rahner 1963: 329). Specific works, such as Heraclitus' *Homeric Allegories*, Porphyry's *Homeric Problems*, and the anonymous *Voyages of Odysseus* gave accounts of modes of reading the poem, designed to unpick the *hyponoia* – the hidden meaning – of the Homeric poem. As individual constructs became represented by different episodes of the poem, the distribution of the symbolic readings of the poem gravitated around Books 9–12: for Heraclitus, the adventures are human foibles: the Lotus Eaters are pleasure (70.3), the Cyclops anger (70.5), the Sirens wisdom (70.9), Charybdis insatiable drinking (70.10), Scylla shamelessness (70.11), the cattle of Helios moderation in eating (70.12) and the Underworld represents Odysseus' desire for man to know all (70.8). The Neoplatonists and Neopythagoreans read the epics as treatises on the soul – Odysseus himself representing the soul, Calypso's island the lures of the world, and Circe's transformations were read as speaking of Platonic reincarnation (Macdonald 1994: 19). The Stoics steered allegorical readings in a less abstract direction, interpreting Odyssean figures as representations of human traits (e.g. Athena as wisdom, Circe as desire, Penelope as chastity – see Macdonald 1994: 19), but also shifting the focus towards Odysseus himself. Horace used the voyage metaphor to make a case for Odysseus' display of Roman *virtus* in harsh circumstances in *Epistles* I.2.18–23:

'...the value of true manhood and of wisdom  
is set before us in an instructive model in Ulysses,  
who put down Troy, who saw into the cities  
and the manners of men, who suffered over the ocean  
to bring himself and his men safe home again,  
but never drowned in the waves of adversity.'<sup>20</sup>

Echoing the opening lines of the *Odyssey*, Horace presents the Homeric protagonist as a solitary figure, admirable for his reaction to his experiences. For Seneca, the benefit of the *Odyssey* was not in the details of Odysseus' wanderings, but rather in the virtue of loving home (*Ep.* 88.7–8). In late antiquity, the adventures were charged with special religious meaning – Clement of Alexandria (in *Protrepticus* 9) read the Christian life as a voyage, with Ithaca the heavenly salvation, spanning Hades on one hand and the light of home on the other, with the island of the Sirens between: only those to refuse the seductions of the Sirens will be protected against destruction (Rahner 1963: 329). As Barkan 1986: 108 has argued, allegory arises from the creation of systems out of individual metaphors: in the case of the *Odyssey*, the mutability of these metaphors is made possible by the system of the voyage – which itself is flexible, and in various combinations can include Odysseus' earlier travels, his self-narrated adventures and his return. Such mutability is also the source of anxiety over how readers will interpret such passages: allegorical possibilities were generated recurrently as scholars attempted to pin the *hyponoia* of the poem as part of assuming moral responsibility for young students.

The acceptance, and embracing, of such interpretive freedom became more apparent in the Renaissance. By the medieval period, the adventures of *Odyssey* had become a potent part of the poem for Christian theologians, with a particular emphasis on Odysseus himself as a paradigm of leadership and of endurance, and even Christ-like through his binding to the mast to protect others (Montiglio 2011: 148). In the Renaissance, these positive attitudes towards the protagonist flourished, led by the Dutch scholar Erasmus, who provided a model for all European humanists reading Homer (Bizer 2011: 23). Erasmus' extensive and influential writing on Homer, theology, and the education of children laid the foundations for Fénelon, most notably in the way it opened up Homeric literature for interpretation. Marc Bizer, in his 2011 study *Homer and the Politics of Authority in Renaissance France*, argues that Erasmus' process of

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<sup>20</sup> Trans. Macleod 1986: 9, adapted.

selecting Homeric proverbs, as evidenced in the *Adagia*, saw an acknowledgement of the interpretative freedom licenced by the stature of the poet. When Erasmus admits that the same licence could not be applied to the work of other poets, except perhaps the 'Latin Homer' Virgil, Bizer argues that he must feel this because of the allegorical opportunities offered by the Homeric poems (2011: 24) as he states in the *Adagia* that: 'there is almost no verse by this poet that cannot be turned to some proverbial expression' (1982: 281). From this acknowledgement arose a way of reading Homer, via the work of educational authorities: 'by disassembling the Homeric and Virgilian text into a series of proverbs and commonplaces, not only was it possible for the humanist to take liberties with the text, but the fragments themselves, removed from their original context, were freed to take on a life of their own, in both Erasmus and the works of others who consulted Erasmus's work' (Bizer 2011: 26).

The process of breaking down the Homeric poems into allegories that could operate independently was undertaken with a pedagogical agenda: the selections appealed to essential truths that Erasmus felt future scholars and students would need to absorb (Bizer 2011: 26). In Erasmus' *De copia*, specific Odyssean allegorical lessons were outlined, which would become standard for French humanists (Bizer 2011: 27). The episodes allegorized in antiquity continued to be promoted, in different interpretive iterations: the rejection of the lotus represents the rejection of base pleasure, but the Sirens are the dangers of flattery, and the route between Scylla and Charybdis is the narrow path of virtue along between extravagance and meanness (1978: 612) – all lessons which were broadly emphasized by humanists. Central was the figure of Odysseus as a man gaining wisdom through hard experience: the failure of Odysseus to transform after Circe touches him with her wand 'demonstrates that firm and constant purpose characteristic of the wise man, which cannot be weakened by fear or deflected from what is honourable by any blandishments of the emotions' (1978: 612). Erasmus also looked within the adventure episodes, beyond broad narrative strokes: the *moly* given by Hermes to Odysseus, which allows his self-protection, symbolizes the wisdom sought by man (1978: 612). Whilst Erasmus, as Bizer 2011: 28 notes, fully recognized that many of his readings could be found in commentators from antiquity, such as Eustathius, Erasmus' interpretations were remarkable for their accessibility across Europe and are therefore of key relevance for my purposes.

The liberation discovered by humanistic readings was not without limitations: 'Humanists were aware not only of the difficulties involved in extracting meaning allegorically from the texts they were reading, but they were also concerned about the extent to which the truth revealed by an allegorical interpretation would be sanctioned by an ancient author' (Bizer 2011: 25). Here, the responsibility of conveying the ancient past to children came into conflict with reading classical literature in the liberated way deemed appropriate for the contemporary world. Indeed, Erasmus began to negotiate this balancing act with specific children in mind, when he outlined how the *Odyssey* ought to be taught to young royals in his 1516 work *Institutio principis Christiani* (*Education of a Christian Prince*), using Odysseus' encounter with Polyphemus:

'While his pupil is still a little child, he can introduce into entertaining stories, amusing fables, and clever parables the things he will teach directly when the boy is older.

When the little pupil has enjoyed hearing Aesop's fable of the lion being saved in his turn by the good offices of the mouse, or of the dove protected by the industry of the ant, and when he has had a good laugh, then the teacher should spell it out: the fable applies to the prince, telling him never to look down on anybody but to try assiduously to win over by kindness the heart of even the humblest of the common people...When he has recounted the story of Cyclops, whose eye was put out by Ulysses, the teacher should say in conclusion that the prince who had great physical, but not mental, strength is like Polyphemus.' (1978: 211-2)<sup>21</sup>

Where Plato was concerned with children being exposed to violent tales, or ones that undermined the authority of the gods, the humanist Erasmus is concerned by the superficiality of entertainment for the purposes of educating a prince. The 'entertaining stories' of Aesop's *Fables* are not harmful in themselves, and for younger children this recreational appeal is useful: moreover, the *Fables* are designed deliberately as allegory, making their usage in a pedagogical context more straightforward. The *Odyssey*, however, is more complex. The Cyclops episode has been singled out as one of the 'entertaining stories', but it was also one that conveniently suits the humanist allegorical interpretation of the *Odyssey*. For younger readers, the poem ought to be like the *Fables* – with a fixed allegorical meaning – and one that suited the pedagogue over

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<sup>21</sup> Trans. Cheshire and Heath 1978: 211-2

and above the Homeric poem. In the *De copia*, Erasmus acknowledges the vast interpretive potential of the *Odyssey*, and the superficiality of the young reader:

‘Our student will flit like a busy bee through the entire garden of literature, will light on every blossom, collect a little nectar from each, and carry it to his hive. Since there is such an abundance of material that one cannot gather everything, he will at least take the most striking and fit this into his scheme of work.

Some material can serve not only diverse but contrary uses, and for that reason must be recorded in different places. For example, if you are describing the incurable greed of a miser, you may properly bring in the tale of Charybdis; but if you are talking of insatiable gluttony, or woman’s inexhaustible lust Charybdis will fit again.’ (1978: 639)<sup>22</sup>

For Erasmus, the pedagogue must provide a single, resonant lesson within a given context from a vast body of possibilities, but the *Odyssey* is secondary to these lessons, being moulded to fit them. The interpretive potential of the *Odyssey* is extremely useful, but the fear of a partially informed student, or one with a useless interpretation means that a directional force is necessary. A specific mode of reading of the *Odyssey* as allegory gradually started to become a transnational first mode of encounter with the poem via Erasmus – even if such teachings, in reality, were applied to a highly exclusive set of pupils.

One of the central benefits to those concerned with children’s exposure to literature was how allegory (via the educational expertise of Erasmus and other humanists) encouraged the admiration of Odysseus. Stanford 1954: 121 argues that through the development of allegorical readings, Odysseus’ actions in the *Odyssey* became separated from the *Iliad* and other parts of the Epic Cycle, meaning that Odysseus became distanced from negatively charged characterization, such as his relationship with Palamedes and Philoctetes, or his other appearances in epic and Greek tragedy:<sup>23</sup> elements which would strongly interfere with the *Odyssey* as exemplum. Stanford also expresses the underlying claims that this ‘did harm’ to the poem, by separating out the traits of a fundamentally complex hero (1954: 125). Yet, despite the

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<sup>22</sup> Trans. Knott 1978: 639.

<sup>23</sup> Examples of such characterisation include the Doloneia in *Iliad 10*, *Sophocles’ Ajax* and *Philoctetes*, and *Euripides’ Hecuba*, *Iphigenia at Aulis*, and *The Trojan Women* (Stanford 1992: 102–117), or Odysseus as the target of unfavourable remarks between the Sophists and in the work of Pindar (Stanford 1992: 90–101).



convenience provided by allegorizations to pedagogues, the *Odyssey* would become only more controversial as literature for children at the beginning of the Enlightenment. Like *Education of a Christian Prince*, as a 'Mirror for Princes' – a work designed either for the direct instruction of a future monarch or for providing general paradigms of kingship<sup>24</sup> – Fénelon's *The Adventures of Telemachus* had a series of established predecessors, dating back to antiquity. The underlying humanist principles laid out by Erasmus over a century earlier had become fundamental to pedagogy in Europe. However, it would be the public awakening to the wider application of these humanist lessons for the young, made possible by a broad range of political, social, and economic factors, that propelled the *Odyssey* into the spotlight, and controversy.

ii. Fénelon

Fénelon was a clergyman, writer and philosopher, born in 1651 in the Perigord region of France to an old, but impoverished aristocratic family.<sup>25</sup> Having trained first at the University of Cahors, where he read rhetoric and philosophy, and then at the Collège du Plessis to study theology, he finally trained as a priest in Séminaire de Saint-Sulpice in Paris. After having spent some time preaching to Huguenots under the directive of the king (following the Edict of Nantes), his career ascended sharply. On becoming friends with some key members of the French court (including the Duc de Beauvilliers and the Duc de Chevreuse), the Duchess de Beauvilliers, who had eight daughters, asked Fénelon for his advice on raising girls. The result was the 1687 work, *Traité de l'éducation des filles* (*On the Education of Girls*). It was a work which would gain Fénelon favour in influential circles, and was particularly topical: Kearns 1979: 138 comments that many educationalists of the mid-to late seventeenth century were calling for the education of girls at an equivalent level to boys, though as Davis 1979: 42 notes, there was a wide range of opinions as to exactly how egalitarian any levelling measures should be. These educationalists did not consistently suggest that boys and girls study the same subjects, rather that girls should indeed receive a literature education as it

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<sup>24</sup> There are examples dating back to antiquity, including Xenophon's *Cyropaedia* and Seneca's *De Clementia*, but it is most commonly associated with the Middle Ages and Renaissance eras – the most famous example aside from Erasmus, Machiavelli's *Il Principe*, being first written in 1513 to enduring philosophical and political influence.

<sup>25</sup> For further biographical information on Fénelon, see Riley 2001: 79, Riley 2004, Janet 1912: 6, and Davis 1979: 15–34.

benefited society. Fénelon himself (1966: 2) suggested that girls had no need of training for government, philosophy, law, or theology but that a selected literate education would provide the tools to find fulfilment in their duties and maintain their virtue. Whilst there might have been disagreements about suitable subject matter for boys and girls in this period, there was not yet a concrete separation of children's and adults' literature, let alone material specifically aimed at each sex.<sup>26</sup>

Though Fénelon wrote for a nominally female pupillage, in reality *On the Education of Girls* had a wider application: the focus of the first part of the work is explicitly applicable to both sexes. Fénelon views the brains of young children of both sexes to be (quite literally) soft and impressionable (1966: 15–6),<sup>27</sup> meaning that teachers should be sympathetic rather than severe (1966: 18–9), and that adults should fully exploit children's love of stories, whilst imbuing them with moral and religious purpose. The treatise was contemporary with John Locke's *Some Thoughts Concerning Human Understanding* in (1690), which would become the most famous proponent of the theory of the child as a blank slate. Fénelon's discussion of female education enjoyed international success, as Ahn 2013: 3 notes, it was recognised and translated into English before the arrival of *The Adventures of Telemachus*: his *Traité de l'éducation des filles* was also translated and published for the English market in the same year as *The Education of Young Gentlewomen* (1699). Yet despite its politesse, there were hints of politically subversive preferences in *On the Education of Girls*: as Riley 2001: 79 notes, it suggested the author's taste for the ideal of pastoral simplicity featured in classical texts such as Virgil's *Georgics*, an appreciation which would, as I shall explore, eventually contribute to the ruin of his career.

In 1689, seemingly on the basis of the educational views expressed in *On the Education of Girls*, Fénelon was appointed as tutor to the young Duke of Burgundy, who, as the grandson of Louis XIV (the 'Sun King'), was the second-generation *heir apparent* to the French throne (Chilton, 1997: xxi). He would compose a number of imaginative works for his royal pupil, which explored both the fantastic and the classical. *Fables*

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<sup>26</sup> This is not to say that there were not any literary works which were primarily aimed at children, but rather that there was not a body of literature which was commercially recognised as being of a children's market.

<sup>27</sup> However, the 'blank slate' premise can be traced back to Aristotle *On the Soul* 3.4 via Thomas Aquinas. As a clergyman, classicist and educator, his inspiration could have come from any one or all of these authors, though the contemporary nature of Locke's writing illustrates the contemporary relevance of this concept.

*composez pour l'éducation d'un prince* (composed 1689–1697) is a collection of twenty-eight short tales, which were not published in an authorized version until after Fénelon's death (Joost 1950: 52). These tales were often modelled on the animal fables of Aesop, with titles including *Le Loup et le jeune Mouton* ('The Wolf and the young Lamb'), *Le Renard puni de sa curiosité* ('The fox punished for its curiosity'), *Le Chat et les Lapins* (The cat and the rabbits), *La Pigeon puni de son inquiétude* ('The pigeon punished for its anxiety'), *Le jeune Bacchus et le Faune* ('The young Bacchus and the faun'), and *Aristée et Virgile* ('Aristaeus and Virgil').<sup>28</sup> One of these stories, *Voyage dans l'île des plaisirs*, imagined an island created out of sugar and luxurious food, where there are forests of liquorice and volcanoes of chocolate and liqueur, mines of ham, sausages and stews, it rains wine, men sell dreams according to their beauty and extra stomachs for gluttony, and the main city consists of one enormous mansion (*Œuvres* 1823: 38–41). There is no anger (40), or inequality between people (41), the residents understand each other perfectly through telepathy (42): however, they have abolished laws and other social structures, men are governed (subversively) by women, and by the end, the traveller is weary of constant amusements and returns to 'une vie sobre, dans un travail modéré', living instead in the 'mœurs puré' of virtue, happiness and health (43). Another, *Voyage Supposé en 1690*, explores a journey from Marseille to Sicily, Egypt and the Red Sea, where the travellers discover another similarly strange island, with exotic and sensual delights (1823: 455–7). The immortal inhabitants of this island, however, are crude and hostile to strangers: they have slaves who do their thinking for them, they say no to everything, write in semicircles, and eat the contents of their noses (457–8). The traveller asks if there are lions, bears, tigers and panthers on the island, only to understand that 'il n'y avait dans ces charmantes îles rien de féroce que les hommes' – 'there was nothing in these delightful islands as fierce as men' (459).

From these stories, we can see not only an adherence to the humanist education suggested by Erasmus, but that for younger children, imaginative fantasy was developing creatively as a means of delivering moral lessons. Fénelon wrote more than one travel-based fable, which he must have felt was not only received well by his young audience, but suited his purposes equally. The temporary nature of the voyages, and the impossibility or improbability of the islands and their peoples, served to highlight the difference between the fantasy world and the 'real world' of the travellers: they drew a

<sup>28</sup> The latter is based on the account of Aristaeus and the bees in *Georgics* 4.281–558.

strong divide between the two worlds, and allowed both pedagogical and imaginative satisfaction, without mutual threat. The allegorical possibilities of the *Odyssey*, when considered alongside these *Fables*, were also hugely appealing to both educator and prince – but Fénelon would only be able to use a fraction of the interpretive license he used in the *Fables* because of the status of the *Odyssey* in the most significant literary debate of his time.

iii. *La querelle des Anciens et des Modernes*

During his time in his position as royal tutor, Fénelon would translate part of the *Odyssey* for his pupil, who appeared to enjoy the poem – a factor that he would exploit fully when it came to writing his later, career-defining work. Dussud 2010: 90 explains that the manuscript of this first adaptation of the *Odyssey*, which consisted of a translation of Books 5–10 (Davis 1979: 21), was never published in his lifetime – though it was amongst his papers at the end of his life, the original manuscript has disappeared, though much later editions exist.<sup>29</sup> It seems likely, given the lack of publication within his own lifetime, that Fénelon’s translated selections of the poem remained a private lesson.<sup>30</sup> The published scholarship on the translation is not extensive and *The Adventures of Telemachus* vastly overshadows this translation, but even in this prototext, there were hints at the direction the more successful work would take.

The young prince was introduced to the adventures of Odysseus – a format he was already familiar with from the *Fables*, and enjoyed, but also the parts of the poem where Fénelon could draw on a wealth of humanist allegorizations. Fénelon’s choice of books to translate is striking: he begins from Book 5, using the natural break provided by the switch to our first introduction to Odysseus on Calypso’s isle, working through to Book 10, Odysseus’ encounter with Circe. For a Christian theologian, this is partly strategic: to carry on to Book 11 would involve engagement with an entirely pagan afterlife. It is no coincidence then that the books which Fénelon selected in this earlier translation depict ‘kingly’ behaviour – the ‘grace, power’ and ‘majesty’ of the Homeric

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<sup>29</sup> In addition to the de Querbeuf (1787) text, there were also further versions by Tenré (1822), Gosselin and Caron (1824), and Leroux and Jouby (1850).

<sup>30</sup> The translation appears in the later version by de Querbeuf. The editor provides a précis and epilogue to Fénelon’s abbreviated *Odyssey*, which was useful to understand the whole poem ‘sans recourir à Homère ou à [the translation of] Madame Dacier’ (1787: 4) – reflecting the increasing access to literature throughout the eighteenth century.

poem: in the setting of the Phaeacian court, Odysseus asserts himself when provoked by Euryalos in *Od.* 8 in a fashion that must have been highly appealing to the French author:

‘...there is a certain kind of man, less noted for beauty,  
but the god put comeliness on his words...  
and people look on him as a god when he walks in the city.  
Another again in his appearance is like the immortals,  
but upon his words there is no grace distilled...’ (*Od.* 8:169–70, 173–5)

The de Querbeuf edition (bearing in mind its much later emergence) suggests that this particular dialogue was influential, as the work appeared to edit the selected books into prose form, and this is one of the few extended speeches that was included (1787: 90). Indeed, the idealistic nature of Phaeacian society as a whole must have also been greatly appealing to Fénelon in its aptness for didactic material: the king Alcinous is ‘not of such a kind as to be recklessly angry. Always moderation is better’ (*Od.* 7:309–10) and the land is blessed with an abundance of produce which is cultivated by humans (*Od.* 7:103–32). However, it is also noticeable that the fantastical elements in the selected books all take a humanoid form: the goddesses, but also the Lotus Eaters, the Laestrygonians and even the Cyclops all take a human shape, albeit a deviant version. The closest the translation comes to fantasy is Circe’s transformation of the pigs, but this is conducted through a human-shaped agent (albeit divine in nature). Other books of the Homeric poem which fall later are omitted – which means Scylla, Charybdis, the Sirens, the cattle of Helios are not outlined: ‘monsters’, that is to say non-human, or hybrid terrors which may bear less of a direct correspondence, and are more difficult to relate to the real world, have no place in this *Odyssey*. A didactically led *Odyssey* for a prince needs to speak more directly about human life. As a result, as Fénelon’s royal charge matured, there was a notable shift away from the fantastic elements in the Odyssean texts that he produced for him, which was not simply due to Erasmus’ suggestion that older children could take lessons more directly. Rather, this was a particular response to an argument that Odysseus’ fantastical adventures are inherently childish, which was a key part of a wider debate concerning the ancient world for the best part of a century.

Upon moving to court, Fénelon became an active participant in *la querelle des Anciens et des Modernes* – the Quarrel of the Ancients and the Moderns – a debate which

took on the question of the value of the arts more broadly, but where literature played a defining role. The Quarrel marked a point of no return: it was the first time that the classical world had been placed in opposition to progress (Simonsuuri 1979: 19). The Enlightenment had drawn more formal lines between areas of scholarship: the separation of the textual authority of arts and sciences led by Descartes was motivated by a desire for a *'tabula rasa* on which a new philosophy and a new science were to be constructed' – the direct result of which was that the 'storehouse of wisdom' acquired from the classical past was now considered by its critics 'an accumulation of errors and mutually invalidating opinions' (Cave 2008: 421). In its basic form, the Quarrel contested either that modern writers should follow the example of the ancient world, or, as the Moderns would have it, that they should instead follow their own creative intuition. Members of the *Académie française* became occupied with questions of relative artistic excellence, the inspiration provided by each culture, and the need to acknowledge their predecessors (Norman, 2011: 20). Traditionally, this debate is presented in scholarship as between two opposing fixed camps of scholars:<sup>31</sup> however, as Larry Norman argues in his 2011 work, *The Shock of the Ancient* – the reality of the debate was not polemical, but rather dialectical: an '*internal conflict* opposing the often contradictory positions held by each individual partisan' (2011: 15). The *Odyssey* as children's literature contributes further to this reassessment of this debate: the poem is uniquely placed to expose both the commonalities between Fénelon and his opposition, and also the concessions made by both sides. At the same time, the debate saw the *Odyssey* explicitly questioned as children's literature: the participants would use the language of children and childhood in relation to the Homeric poem to outline the relative merits of the ancient world. As the representative of the future generations who will grow in the light of this cultural turbulence, the child becomes a figure whose perceived blank state status, both as real proto-adult, and as a permanent ideal construct, was manipulated to varying ends. As a result, the Quarrel helps to elucidate the reasons why the *Odyssey* was not ready yet to become a fantasy-orientated piece of literature for children.

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<sup>31</sup> Debates concerning the contributions of past generations can also be found in antiquity. As Cave 2008: 417 notes, the *neoterioi* of Alexandria and the *novi* of Latin authors acting as predecessors for the terms *veteres* and *moderni* for ancients and moderns respectively in the Middle Ages.

The Quarrel formally erupted when Charles Perrault presented *Le siècle de Louis le Grand* to the Academy in 1687: it was a poetic manifesto for the superiority of contemporary poets and writers, and an embodiment of the Moderns' cause:

'Beautiful antiquity was always venerable,  
But I never believed it was adorable.  
I see Ancients without a bending knee,  
They are great, yes, but men just as are we...  
If we were to lift the specious veil  
Which prejudice puts before our eyes,  
And, tired of applauding a thousand gross errors,  
Were sometimes to use the lights of our reason,  
We would see clearly, without temerity,  
That one might not adore all antiquity.'  
(trans. Norman, 2011: 80)

The recognition by the Moderns of the cultural contributions of the ancient world is often overlooked, yet it was in the very first lines of the gauntlet laid down by Perrault. The ancient world is characterised as misinterpreted – whilst he acknowledges its value and inspirational quality, it is the submission to this authority that Perrault finds most objectionable. However, as Norman 2011: 64 argues, the Ancients had not taken a temerous, or uncritical approach to the ancient world either: rather, there was an established passion for the 'wonderous remoteness' of the past, as opposed to 'doctrinal authority'. The association of the sublime with the Ancient cause had roots in Nicolas Boileau's 1674 translation of Longinus' *On the Sublime*: as the most prominent Ancient partisan, he would reissue this work with added critical comments in light of Perrault's attack. For Boileau, the sublime was:

'...the extraordinary and the marvellous which can strike us in discourse, making a work lift us up, ravish us, transport us.'  
(trans. Gilby 2013)<sup>32</sup>

The sublime is the well communicated: Boileau calls it 'a "je ne sais quoi"' that it is easier to feel than speak about' (Gilby 2013). Perrault understood, in his first poetic response, that this definition of the sublime would shoulder the majority of the arguments of Boileau and other defenders of the ancient world. As a result, his own

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<sup>32</sup> *Œuvres complètes*, 1966: 338.

hope of victory is based upon disrupting this sense of wonder: plausibility became a key topic, despite the acknowledgement by Perrault of the imaginative power of the ancient world.

The Homeric poems became key texts in this tension between these two concepts, and particularly the *Odyssey*. In the two central areas in which the *Odyssey* would be criticised – propriety, and plausibility, Perrault could fall back on criticisms that had recurred since antiquity. In his dialogue *Parallèle des Ancients et des Modernes* (in four volumes, 1688–97),<sup>33</sup> he outlines some of the specific issues regarding the protagonist:

[Priest]...if Homer had determined the character of Ulysses well, we would not be anxious to know if this hero was a good man, or a rogue...

President

You know Homer describes in the first verse of the *Odyssey*, a cunning and experienced man, who has seen things.

Knight

That is to say, Odysseus was a man suited to any occasion; a man who knows how to walk and to talk in any style.

Priest

This character is excellent; but it is necessary to understand if he was good or bad in his cunning; or if it was one or the other, depending on the occasion. Moreover, although he is an adaptable and cunning man, playing strong kinds of characters when it is needed, nevertheless it must be that character has its limits, and you cannot see without indignation and disgust one of heroes of the *Iliad* going to bed at night with the swine, and the next day fighting a villainous beggar with his fists for leftovers from the kitchen of Penelope.' (4.38–9)

Perrault exploits the Homeric poems for his own purpose by insisting on a unity of character between them (and therefore of authorship) and as a result, his distaste for Odysseus' actions on Ithaca attempts to draw his 'true character' into question – despite his notorious fame as a man of many turns. Odysseus' ambiguity as a protagonist was nothing new, but Perrault used it falsely to suggest the arguments of the Ancients – presuming that they were prepared to defend antiquity in all aspects. We might expect Perrault to attempt to expose the hypocrisy of the French Ancients promoting Homeric

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<sup>33</sup> Translations from *Parallèle des Anciens et des Modernes* are my own.



heroes who were not fully accepted within the ancient world, but instead he sets up the Ancients to defend the most open-ended questions of the *Odyssey*, regarding morality and unity. He appears magnanimously to 'forgive' these errors, because he sees the poet, as DeJean notes, 'like all ancients...as a product of his age', having been corrupted by the world around him, but this still made the Homeric poet flawed: 'Had he been fortunate enough to have been born in Louis' century, Homer would never have made these mistakes' (1997: 43).

This bait was not taken by Ancient partisans in the way Perrault might have hoped. Later in 1714, Fénelon freely admitted that the Homeric poems were not innocent of some of the claims of the Moderns:

'I cannot doubt that the religion and the manners of the heroes of Homer have great faults. It is natural that these faults shock us in this poet's images. But I make an exception for the amiable simplicity of the nascent world: this simplicity of manners is so far from our luxury that it is not a fault, and it is our luxury which is the great fault.'<sup>34</sup>

Fénelon recognised that it was somewhat futile to mount a defence of the ancient world based on the beliefs and behaviour of Homeric characters: by shifting focus away onto the issue of excessive luxury, he can retain a foundation in the ancient world which is deemed morally appropriate in the modern one. However, this basis did not serve to create allegorical readings of the *Odyssey* as a means of defence. As Norman 2011: 187 notes: 'There is thus a reason why the Ancients were known as the party of the Sublime, and not the party of Allegory... As Fénelon remarked in his defence of ancient poetry in the 1715 *Lettre a l'Académie*, Homer's use of mythical figures should be considered good fiction, not esoteric figuration':

'I do not at all believe (and perhaps it's my fault) what many learned persons have believed. They say that Homer put into his poems the most profound politics, the purest ethics, and the most sublime theology.... The Platonists of the lower Empire, who deceived Julian, vainly imagined allegories and deep mysteries in the deities described by Homer. Such mysteries are chimerical; the scripture and the church fathers have rejected idolatry. While the evidence in the matter indicates an extravagant, monstrous religion, Homer did not create it. He came upon it; he could not change it. He adorned it; he hid great art

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<sup>34</sup> Letter to La Motte, 4<sup>th</sup> May 1714 (*Œuvres* 1824: 277). Translation here is my own.

in his work and introduced it into an order which continually excited the reader's curiosity. He wrote with simplicity, grace, strength, majesty, and passion. What more can we want?' (trans. Warnick, 1984: 110)

As a religious leader, but also a participant in the Quarrel, Fénelon could not appear to vindicate the Greek pantheon or the allegorical interpretations of later ages. Both of the letters above were written after the scandal provoked by *The Adventures of Telemachus* (as explored in the next section) – but this scandal was due, at least overtly, to the meaning of Fénelon's own allegorizations, rather than his hypotextual material. What they tell us is that in awareness of the surrounding debates of the Quarrel, Fénelon had to distance himself from previous didactic tactics and arguments in order to form a solid defence of the *Odyssey*, and by association, his own work. By claiming that the *Odyssey* was to be admired for its sublime nature, and its entertaining qualities – making it art and not a paradigm – Fénelon separated himself from the allegorizations that left him vulnerable to criticism.

The adventures of the *Odyssey*, which had 'excited the reader's curiosity' and so preoccupied the allegorists, were part of a bigger picture of the Homeric world that promoted a sense of escape and exoticism. Fénelon wrote in the same letter of 1715:

'When poets wish to charm men's imaginations, they lead them far from the great cities and cause them to forget the extravagance of their century. They put them back into the golden age and, rather than portraying turbulent courts and great men unhappy in their greatness, they show us shepherds dancing on flowery grass under the shade of a grove in a delightful season.' (trans. Warnick, 1984: 109)

As the Homeric poems are to be admired for their sublime qualities, imaginative potential becomes key: the pastoral idealism that Fénelon associates with the ancient world gives his own position moral definition. The escapism provided by the classical past evokes a more simplistic and less morally complicated world for Fénelon. As a result, any recycled arguments of antiquity concerning morality would not take hold by themselves: instead, by associating such primitivity and baseness of the ancient world with children and childhood, Perrault could overcome the awe of the sublime more effectively. Perrault not only critiques, 'the sensual charms of the faraway' (Norman

2011: 171), but he also conducts an equally biting examination of the ‘sentimental charms of childhood’, both of which for Perrault, represent the ancient world:

‘The poetry of the Ancients had all of the marks and qualities of childhood. Children speak simply, and they only say what first comes to them, without thinking about it. They almost always need someone to serve as their interpreter when they speak of something a little difficult. We admire everything they say, when they show a little wit or reason. And finally, we allow them all sorts of liberties, which we call kindnesses.’ (*Parallèle*, 3.24)

Indeed, though the Homeric poems were the reading of their own childhood, the Moderns made the Ancients love of their old stories seem peculiar: alongside other Moderns such as Fontenelle,<sup>35</sup> Perrault calls the Ancients’ partisan taste a nostalgia for infancy, exposing, as Norman calls it, their ‘odd sentimentality as a kind of homesickness for an idealized past, a childhood of reading and dreaming of books.’ (2011: 173). Perrault describes the reading of ancient works as a kind of stupor, but he also he concedes that this is deeply appealing:

‘Some [supporters of the Ancients] follow in the impression that they have received from their schoolmasters, and remain schoolchildren until death without realising it. Others preserve a love for the authors that they read when they were young, like the places where they spent the first years of their life, because these places and these authors evoke the pleasant ideas of their youth.’ (*Parallèle* 1.100)

The childish love of ancient literature leaves readers uncritical and unaware, sentimental and backward-looking: key flaws for the Modern view that was rooted in rationalism and the Enlightenment. However, it was not difficult for the Ancients to appropriate the accusations of ‘childishness’ and use them directly against the arguments of the Moderns, with the result that it laid significant intellectual foundations for the development of children’s literature and the surrounding child-culture, as Norman 2011: 67 notes:

‘What is the response of Ancient apologists to the new paradigm of antiquity as the “infancy of the world”? Once again, they appropriate it

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<sup>35</sup> Fontenelle wrote: ‘...we welcome it still today with pleasure, and we let it exercise on us almost all its ancient power, so easily do we fall back into our infancy’ (*Oeuvres*, 1818: 38).

for their own ends. If the Ancient party no longer has recourse to filial veneration for one's elders, they can now lay claim to the inverse relation: the parental love of moderns for their beloved children, the ancients. They can also exploit a certain language of nostalgia for lost childhood. More crucially, it leaves open a whole new terrain for defenders of ancient culture: the celebration of the creative expansiveness and freedom of childhood, a period lacking in intellectual maturity perhaps, but all the richer in imaginative play.'

The central purpose of Norman's argument (recurring throughout his book) is to illustrate that the Ancients were not conservative, or outmoded, but instead actively celebrating the ancient world. As the next section explores, Fénelon's *The Adventures of Telemachus* exploited the association of childishness and imagination when borrowing the voyage of Odysseus. Yet this imagination was being put to explicitly didactic ends, and in fact Fénelon would share certain approaches with his Modern critics. The discourse on childhood and literature on both sides illustrates both the overlap and the limits between the vested parties of the Quarrel, when viewed through the lens of the *Odyssey*.

The *Odyssey* was specifically singled out by Perrault when he writes of this sentimentality for the experiences of reading as a child. In the *Parallèle*, the Knight questions the fact that the Cyclopes universally interpret Polyphemus' complaint about 'Nobody', and do not think it worth further enquiry (3.84). He then remarks:

'When one is older than twelve years old, is it possible to take pleasure in such tales?' (3:85)

The rationality provided by maturity, Perrault suggests, precludes the enjoyment of tales that are not grounded in reality. The sublime sense of wonder provoked by Odysseus' travels is to be dismissed as a purely childish phenomenon. By 'such tales' we can ourselves understand that Perrault almost certainly refers to the travels of Odysseus as depicted in books 5–12 of the *Odyssey*, and by referring to them as 'tales' he is not suggesting just that they are naturally recreationally appealing to children, but also that they are episodic and can be treated in isolation from the rest of the narrative. As part of this polemic, it is natural that the fantastical episodes of the *Odyssey* would be singled out: Odysseus' encounters with the monstrous Scylla or the Sirens embodied all the irrationalities which the Moderns criticised ancient poetry for as a whole – and as a

result the poem emblematised the infantilisation of society which the Moderns accused the Ancients of promoting. Yet in attacking his adult adversaries, Perrault stops short of rejecting the *Odyssey* entirely: it still retains a significance in its ability to entertain the young, even if this is not palatable to older readers.

Perrault had his own ideas about suitable literature for children. His arguments that there was a need for pedagogical guidance when reading ancient poetry also contributed to the notion that this did not promote independent thought, leaving children uncritical. The picture of the Modern desire to break away from a passive position as a reader – which they had argued was promoted by the ‘parental’ Ancients – becomes even more important for children’s versions of the *Odyssey*. Though Perrault does not say it explicitly here, there is a sense that if the *Odyssey* is inadequate because of the need for interpretation, then an alternative is needed for the benefit of young readers.

Yet the ancient world would provide a blueprint for Perrault’s own alternative. Fables, as advocated for children by Erasmus, Fénelon, and another ‘Ancient’, La Fontaine, were recognised by Perrault as a worthy format. In discussing the *Fables* of La Fontaine, Perrault concedes that: ‘There is between a naivety, a surprise and a pleasantry of character that is special, which charms and moves us, and that strikes us as other’ (*Parallèle* 3.303–4). Even then, Perrault attempts to distance the format from the classical past, claiming that: ‘In fables, there is an infinity of similar things, all different between them, and there is not one that has its model in the writings of the ancients, they said pleasant things but they did not enter into the character of fables and they did not develop them in this direction’ (3.305). Despite such a statement, he evidently recognised them as more in keeping with the Modern project – and specifically in relation to children’s literature – than other areas of ancient literature. As Morgan 1985: 35–6 notes, fables were perceived as a distinct and popular literature, with a focus on naturalness and amusement, and equally lauded by participants on both sides of the Quarrel. When Perrault was in charge of the decorations for a new labyrinth at Versailles which was constructed from 1666, he chose the *Fables* of Aesop as the inspiration for the fountains and sculptures, in the hope of being appointed royal tutor (as La Fontaine had done with his dedication of his *Fables choisies* to the dauphin, in a similar hope) (Scott 1982: 220). Fables were the tales that provided a ‘meeting of minds’ (Barchilon & Flinders 1981: 79) between Fénelon and Perrault in relation to

children's literature, but whilst they had an ancient pedigree, they were not exclusively 'ancient'. Perrault's advocacy of fables was part of his selective repurposing of antiquity.

The next step in Perrault's development of fables had significant consequences for the *Odyssey* as children's literature. The literary fairy tale – understood today as a central component of children's literature – was established most famously by the same Perrault of the *querelle* as a response to classical fable. As a genre, these fairy tales were formulated as an antithesis to ancient literature (Zipes 1999: 34), but like the *Odyssey*, literary fairy tales – or *contes de fées* – also did not originate for young audiences. During the time of the *querelle*, *contes de fées* were associated not with the *Académie française*, but rather literary aristocratic salons, which were often led by women. Initially, they originated from oral parlour games that incorporated traditional folktales, but were also a self-conscious exercise in the display of social graces, and principles of oration, such as the appearance of spontaneity (Zipes 1999: 33). Eventually, these stories became genteel enough to be written down: Seifert 1996: 84 notes that between 1690 and 1715, *conteuses* (female authors of the *contes de fées*) wrote two-thirds of all the fairy tales in this period.<sup>36</sup> They were often extensive works, some in verse, full of references which were designed for the benefit of the closed society of readers; the latter example had an 'elegantly erotic tone' (Brown 2005: 349). Though the authors of *contes de fées* depended on a wealth of oral literature, it was this courtly focus that gave these tales a new identity (Zipes 1994: 11). These female storytellers, according to Zipes (1999: 34), were resisting male rationality by writing stories of 'extraordinarily majestic and powerful fairies' – and the Ancients, the Quarrel, and the *Académie* represented precisely this patriarchal arena, not least as Boileau had written several unflattering satires of women. As such, the fairy tale was ripe for exploitation by Perrault and the Moderns.

Amongst the most famous of Perrault's own fairy tales are *Cinderella*, *Sleeping Beauty*, *Puss In Boots*, *Beauty and the Beast*, *Tom Thumb* and *Blue Beard*. These stories were themselves a radical development for fairy tales: although they were addressed to this salon audience, they were formulated differently. Formally, they were regulated, (beginning with the famous 'il était une fois...' or 'once upon a time'); reduced in length and based in traditional stories. These tales promoted moral choices that were resonant

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<sup>36</sup> Some of these tales achieved international recognition: Madame de Aulnoy was the first of these fairy-tale authors to be translated into English with her work, *Histoire d'Hippolyte, Comte de Douglas* (1690), the English *History of Adolphus* (1691) (Brown 2005: 349).

with eighteenth-century readers, and resolutions that were positive and didactic (Simonsuuri 1979: 28). According to Seifert 1996: 43, fairy tales also depended on the fantastic:

‘Within the seventeenth century fairy tales, it is the marvellous that highlights the possibility of figurative readings. As such, the marvellous becomes an emphatic sign of the readability, that is, the figurability or interpretability, of the text...the *merveilleux* can both uphold and disrupt the social outlook that literary plausibility came to signify in seventeenth-century France.’

However, the literary fairy tales would only become republished for specifically for children in the mid 1700s, and even then, they were advocated for their moral reasoning, and the promotion of *civilité* (Zipes 1994: 17–8). Functionally, the literary fairy tale shared much in common with ancient fables – specifically in the elevation of interpretability to central importance. However, fables were not solely an ancient form of literature, and Perrault deliberately blurred the boundaries between the authoritative ancient fables and his new fairy tales. In his 1694 *Contes en vers*, Perrault subverted the authority of ancient literature by referring to his own fairy tales as ‘fables’, and ancient fables ‘contes’ (‘Je pretends meme que mes fables méritent mieux d’être racontées que la plupart des contes anciens’ – ‘I even claim that my fables deserve more to be told than most of the ancient tales’ (1865: 130) – as Seifert 1996: 64–5 argues, making his genre even more canonical than the canon itself.

The Moderns would not incorporate the *Odyssey* into these new fairy tales, however fantastic and interpretable its content might have previously been considered. Erasmus had mingled the adventures of the *Odyssey* with the *Fables* of Aesop, but the Quarrel had the effect of separating Homeric episodes out from such fairy tales. Stanford 1954: 185 argues that ‘In these centuries [seventeenth and eighteenth] attention was chiefly focused on the political career of Ulysses, not on the fairy-tales of the *Odyssey*. The romantic and allegorical elements in the tradition were ignored or minimized in these epochs of *étatisme* and scientific thought. The vogue was for wit, not for fancy’. Though more recent generations have been happy to describe the marvellous adventures of the *Odyssey* as ‘fairy tales’, at the dawn of this genre, the *Odyssey* is not considered a fairy tale in this period. To a certain extent, this problematizes the reference to the adventures as ‘fairy tales’ by Stanford (certainly in his use of this term

in relation to Fénelon), as well as more recent scholars, including Schein (1996: 74). By referring to the adventure portions of the *Odyssey* as 'fairy tales', Stanford acknowledges the special status given to these parts of the poem, hinting at what is perceived as their 'natural' suitability as children's literature, and he implies Fénelon's work is dry and alien in nature because he fails to mimic these episodes. The instinctive labelling of Odysseus' adventures as 'fairy tale' because of their magical and supernatural qualities belies an understanding that the broad use of this term in the modern era, which rarely distinguishes between oral folktale and literary fairy tale, is constant and atemporal. Instead, at the time when the first literary fairy tales were being produced, the *Odyssey* and these *contes* were fundamentally opposed in principle. The Homeric poem needed to be moulded for future generations to be able to call it a 'fairy tale'.

When Fénelon came to write *The Adventures of Telemachus*, there was a Modern influence in the desire to repurpose antiquity for a young audience, but only Fénelon would incorporate the *Odyssey* into this new body of literature for children. Fénelon appeared to distance his work from the previous generations of specific allegorical readings of the *Odyssey*, as this approach drew his work back into the Quarrel, but he could exploit the figurative readings made possible by the new fairy tales promoted by the Moderns, where the didactic voice of the author could speak above the traditional source material. Despite the apparent resemblances in the possibility of extraction of moral lessons, the adventures of the *Odyssey* in the moral light of fables could not be reconciled with the fairy tale. Fénelon did not promote the fantastic, but was instead concerned with the didactic value for his royal pupil, through the figure of Telemachus in particular. In using Telemachus as his protagonist, Fénelon deliberately provided his protégée with a similarly adolescent role model, who is the focalizer for the sublime experience of the ancient world – which simultaneously helped Fénelon to avoid the question of Odysseus' suitability as a hero, a question that both Ancients and Moderns had acknowledged. *The Adventures of Telemachus* was the defining move in casting the *Odyssey* as juvenile literature, and in itself, this appeared to move the sides of the Quarrel towards a middle ground. Whilst Fénelon's work has frequently been depicted as a way to actively 'groom' Ulysses for the royal court (Stanford 1954: 185), it is more nuanced than the purely 'political' or 'spiritual', terms usually applied to this novel. Though the Quarrel had been decided formally in 1697 by Louis XIV in favour of the Ancient partisans (Zipes 1999: 39), Fénelon's incorporations into his version of the



*Odyssey* for a child reader – the exploitation of the association of infancy with the ancient world and of its fantastic and sublime qualities, and the combination of entertainment with educational purpose – would take a first step to integrating ancient myths, but especially the *Odyssey*, with modern literature aimed specifically at children.

iv. *The Adventures of Telemachus*

The effects of the *querelle* very much shape *The Adventures of Telemachus*: Fénelon's work was saturated with classical references framed by the *Odyssey*, but it also suggested that concessions had been made by Fénelon in light of the criticism of the Moderns. The work was a paradigm for the power of the *Odyssey* to teach and entertain simultaneously, harnessing its canonical status and exoticism, and reflecting the Ancients' belief in the value of ancient literature – most of all, the colour and vigour of the Homeric poem that appealed to the author himself. Yet Fénelon could not rely on the *Odyssey* to act as educator, and would have to insert himself into this role. In this new work, there was room for the exotic but not the monstrous: the *merveilleux* were no longer appropriate in their original Homeric form. Instead, the moral resolution of the story was clear and instructive: Fénelon's young royal protégé<sup>37</sup> would need a particular kind of education – one that promoted justice and piety, and a responsibility to his subjects. The existence of the earlier partial translation of the poem hints at two things: first, the early recognition of travel as a key part of engaging children with the poem, and secondly, where we see an agreement with Perrault and the Moderns – that the *Odyssey* is not suitable as it is for a young audience: it needs adjusting in content and focus. In acknowledging this, Fénelon ends up using some of the allegorical methods that he himself had questioned in relation to Homeric poetry: in a modern application for a modern audience, this appeared to be the more palatable option.

The premise of the narrative is that Telemachus, having travelled in search of news of his father, has his own set of adventures between his departure from Sparta and before his arrival back in Ithaca (loosely corresponding with the narrative gap in

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<sup>37</sup> There is some discrepancy between scholars on his age: Chilton argues that *The Adventures of Telemachus* was presented to the young duke in 1696, which would make him fourteen. Riley argues that the work was written between circa 1693–5. If we assume that the prince was not shown any of the work at all during this period, then this may well be correct. The prince could have been in theory, any age between ten and fourteen when he first encountered this material.

lines 301–495 of Book 15 of the *Odyssey*).<sup>38</sup> He is accompanied for the most part by Minerva in her disguise as Mentor (paralleled with the role of Athena in Books 2–4 of the *Odyssey*), who teaches Telemachus about the forms of government in the places he encounters. Already, the author had invoked the established allegorical system of Odysseus' voyage to contain his lessons. The narrative begins as the Homeric poem does: *in medias res*, and on the isle of Calypso, where Odysseus makes his first appearance in the ancient text (cf. *Od.* 1.13–5). The island is taken directly from the *Odyssey* with its 'fountains, sweetly murmuring as they ran along meadows' (1997: 5; cf. *Od.* 5. 69–71), 'the song of birds' (1997: 5; cf. *Od.* 5.65–7), 'tall poplars' (1997: 5; cf. *Od.* 5.64), streams in 'long meanders returned as if they meant to revisit their source' (1997: 5; cf. *Od.* 5) where the fountains run in 'sundry directions' and 'vines hanging in festoons, so loaded with fruit that their leaves could not conceal the ripe clusters' (1997: 5; cf. *Od.* 5.68–9). Yet whilst the details of the island are familiar, Fénelon is quick both to acknowledge the mutual Homeric territory and also establish his independence from it, using central elements of the Homeric poem to reinforce his pupil's canonical learning as well as his own moral lessons. In the immediate opening, the introduction to Calypso depicts her playing an inverted role:

'Frequently did she stand motionless on the beach of the sea, which she watered with her tears, and her face was always turned towards that quarter, where the ship of Ulysses, ploughing the waves, had disappeared from her eyes.' (1997: 3)<sup>39</sup>

Here, Calypso's longing for Odysseus mirrors the Homeric protagonist's longing for his homeland when he was on her island. The poem describes how Calypso finds Odysseus, which is the first direct encounter with him in the poem:

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<sup>38</sup> Davis 1979: 91 notes that the title of the first edition was *Suite du quatrième livre de l'Odysée d'Homère ou les Aventures de Télémaque, fils d'Ulysse (Sequel to the Fourth Book of Homer's Odyssey, or the Adventures of Telemachus, Son of Ulysses)*. In the *Odyssey*, Telemachus actually departs from Sparta in Book 15, rather than the end of Book 4. It might make more sense to view the title as continuing from the themes and content of Book 4, rather than trying to bridge the absence of Telemachus between Books 4 and 15, which seems to be the general tendency amongst *Fénelon* scholars.

<sup>39</sup> I have chosen to use the translation of Tobias Smollett, first written in 1776. Though his diaries (as catalogued online by the Bodleian Library, Oxford, <http://godwindiary.bodleian.ox.ac.uk/>) do not specify that he read Smollett's translation of *The Adventures of Telemachus*, William Godwin read all the major works and a posthumous biography of Smollett, so he is likely to have been aware of it. Fénelon too, would influence Godwin, and I wish to emphasise the continuity of influence between Godwin and Fénelon by using Smollett's translation.

‘...the queenly nymph, when she had been given the message from Zeus, set out searching after great-hearted Odysseus, and found him sitting on the seashore, and his eyes were never wiped dry of tears, and the sweet lifetime was draining out of him, as he wept for a way home, since the nymph was no longer pleasing to him. By nights he would lie beside her, of necessity, in the hollow caverns, against his will, by one who was willing, but all the days he would sit upon the rocks, at the seaside, breaking his heart in tears and lamentation and sorrow as weeping tears he looked out over the barren water.’ (*Od.* 5.149–58)

From the outset, Fénelon invokes the *Odyssey*, and the prior learning of his pupil, through the inversion of this familiar image, but distinguishes it from his own writing through imagining the afterlives of places and characters in Odysseus’ voyages. Telemachus’ voyage will retrace some of his father’s footsteps, allowing continuity, and the voyage is strictly framed within the narrative gap provided by the Homeric poem, but this opening image suggests that there will also be divergences, or reimaginings.

Calypso’s island, as drawn by Fénelon, has a secondary role: it is merged with the function of the Phaeacian court in *Odyssey* 8 – providing the setting for an internal narration. Calypso’s nymph companions play a role similar to that of Demodocus, singing a selection of songs from a variety of classical sources, including the Titanomachy (Hesiod, *Theogony* 617–736), Jupiter and Semele (most extensively told in Ovid, *Met.* 3. 251–313), the birth of Bacchus and his education by Silenus (Horace, *Ars.* 239; Orph. *Hymn.* 53.1), and the race of Atalanta and Hippomenes (Ovid *Met.* 10. 560–651). The nymphs are accompanied on the lyre by Leucothoe (a name suggestive of Ino-Leucothea who rescues Odysseus in *Od.* 5.333–49, but is also the woman whose beauty tempts Helios away from Clytie in Ovid *Met.* 4.167–255, due to the malicious influence of Aphrodite. Telemachus will be tempted to stay on the island by a nymph called Eucharis). Finally, they sing of the Trojan War, and Telemachus’ father, and ‘When Telemachus heard his father’s name mentioned, the tears ran down his cheeks, and added fresh lustre to his beauty’ (1997: 7) – invoking the similar response of his father in the Phaeacian court, upon hearing the same tale:

‘So the famous singer sang his tale, but Odysseus melted, and from under his eyes the tears ran down, drenching his cheeks...’ (*Od.* 8.521–2)

As this scene in the Homeric poem provokes the revelation of Odysseus' identity, the similarity of Telemachus' reaction establishes both father and son as sympathetic characters: in his filial duty, it is suggested that Telemachus is of the same temperament as his father – and given the author's desire for his royal pupil to self-associate with the young prince Telemachus, Odysseus is established in a similarly positive light. Telemachus' reaction also has a more significant narrative role, as it acts as the catalyst for the main narrative. Odysseus' emotional reaction provokes the interest of his hosts as to how he came to their city (*Od.* 8.531–41; 550–86), and he relates his adventures (*Od.* 9–12), just as the song of Troy results in the beginning of Telemachus' recounting of his travels thus far to his hostess. His tears provoke Calypso to change the songs of the nymphs to the Centauromachy (retold briefly by Antinous in *Od.* 21.295–305, also by Ovid *Met.* 12.210–535) and Orpheus' descent to the Underworld. Battle and *katabasis* are key conventions of epic that will also feature in Telemachus' travels – but both tales are also reflective of the damage of a lack of restraint (the Centaurs' inability to handle wine, and Orpheus' failure to follow the instruction not to look back) – a recurring theme throughout Fénelon's work. Only a few lines later, Calypso reflects bitterly on Odysseus' rejection of her offer of immortality, and seductively advises Telemachus to heed this offer more wisely (later on, Mentor will save Telemachus from being enticed into staying on the island forever). Before the story continues further, the author refreshes his pupil's memory, as Calypso recounts to Telemachus the travels of his father:

'The goddess added much more, to shew how happy Ulysses had been while he stayed with her: she recounted his adventures in the cave of the cyclops [sic] Polyphemus, and at the court of Antiphates king of the Lestrigons; nor did she forget what befel him in the island of Circe, the daughter of the Sun, and the dangers to which he was exposed in his passage between Scylla and Charybdis. She described the last tempest which Neptune had raised against him, when he departed from her habitation. Her design was to make him believe, that his father had perished in the storm, for she suppressed his arrival in the island of the Pheacians.' (1997: 7)

This will be the only passage that describes the adventures of Odysseus' voyage (as narrated by Odysseus himself in the *Odyssey*) in any detail, acknowledging the events of the Homeric poem. The ring-fencing of these episodes in such a concise fashion hints

that they will not feature in Fénelon's narrative, even as reimaginings. Of course, these episodes were covered in the selections from the *Odyssey* that Fénelon had given to his pupil – but *The Adventures of Telemachus* was not detached totally from Odysseus' adventures, and the choices made by Fénelon were not motivated purely by prior teaching.

Calypso's recounting of Odysseus' travels leads her to ask Telemachus how he came to arrive on her island, leading him to recount his voyages thus far to her – mimicking Odysseus' narrative to the Phaeacians. Telemachus' route – including his travels as related to Calypso, and his later voyages – are firmly based on the epic tradition, taking him to numerous places which correspond to the travels of Menelaus as recounted in Book 4 of the *Odyssey* (cf. 4.80–90; Egypt, Cyprus, Phoenicia, past the coast of Libya) and Virgil's Aeneas in the *Aeneid* (3.381–440, 6; Crete (cf. 3.129), south Italy, and the Sicilian coast (3.381–440), and the Underworld (6). These adventures are amongst the many other examples which demonstrate the author's inspiration by a wide range of classical authors, which is evident at multiple levels of the novel: narratively, thematically, and didactically. The tone for the work is set early on by a visit to Egypt (which owes much to Herodotus 2 and Diodorus Siculus 1), illustrating the kind of moral lessons the young duke is supposed to absorb. Telemachus is struck by the refined civilisation there:

'Mentor made me remark the joy and abundance that overspread the whole country of Ægypt...He admired the wise police of those cities, the justice exercised in favour of the poor against the rich, the proper education of the children, who were accustomed to obedience, labour, and sobriety, to the love of arts and literature; the precision with which all ceremonies of religion were performed; the disinterestedness, the love of honour, the honesty in their dealings with men, and the reverence for the gods, which every father infused in his children. There was no end of his admiring this excellent order. 'Happy the people,' said he, without ceasing, 'who are governed by a wise sovereign! but happier still is the king who makes so many nations happy; and who finds his reward in his own virtue...he is not only obeyed, but obeyed with pleasure.' (trans. Smollett, 1997: 15)

When the two men approach Thebes they are captivated by its luxury: 'the squares are adorned with fountains and obelisks...the prince's palace alone appears like a great city; for nothing is seen but marble columns, pyramids, and obelisks, colossal statues, and

furniture of massy gold and silver' (1997: 15). However, the king Sesostris, a good and sincere man himself, is accompanied by corrupt and sycophantic advisors. Similar political exempla make up the bulk of the novel, including a ruler with a ruthless and ambitious mistress, civilisations at war, and a former king of Crete, who through his own folly, was forced to commit infanticide but is rehabilitated as the monarch of a new kingdom by Mentor. Such exempla frequently make use of specific classical allusions: the rehabilitated king is Idomeneus, who appears frequently in the *Iliad* (particularly 2.645–52, 3.361–520), and is noted in the *Odyssey* (3.191) as having returned safely from Troy to rule in Crete. Fénelon's Telemachus comes across Idomeneus after his exile from Crete, in his new role as founder of Salentum, an invented city, which serves as canvas for Fénelon.<sup>40</sup> Even the most minor of characters demonstrate Fénelon's wide use of classical allusions: for example the name of Peisistratos' tutor is Callimachus (a learned allusion, perhaps, to the role of the historical Pisistratus as first editor of Homer), whilst one of the soldiers on the side of Idomeneus, Telemachus and their allies in the battle at the end of the novel is called Aristogeiton – whose namesake, along with Harmodius, overthrew the tyrant Hipparchus (c.f. Herodotus 6.123, Thucydides 6.54).

With such a wide-reaching voyage, there are scenes that take place on the ships between places, but unlike the *Odyssey*, these voyages are not the place for encounters with wild or dangerous beasts. In one such instance, Telemachus and Mentor-Minerva, having jumped into the sea to avoid the wrath of Calypso, who has an unrequited love for Telemachus (as her Odyssean counterpart did for his father), are received on board a Tyrian ship where a banquet takes place (1997: 95–7). Achitoas, the bard, 'sung in so ravishing a manner, as would have charmed the gods, and even Apollo himself. The tritons, nereids, and the other marine gods and goddesses, and even the sea-monsters, quitting their deep and humid grottos, gathered round the ship, to hear such exquisite music' (1997: 95). We have sea-beasts, but they are a footnote in a bigger lesson: Telemachus uses the music to reflect on the 'passions of youth' which he had been caught in on Calypso's isle, and Mentor reassures him:

'You may now, with propriety, unbend your mind. True wisdom disclaims all austerity and affectation: all true pleasure is derived from

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<sup>40</sup> The story of his filicide seems to come from a post-Homeric tradition, as mentioned by *Serv.ad.Aen.* 3.121. This is only hinted at in Fénelon: 'You know, my dear friends, the tragical events that obliged me to quit that isle' (1997: 112).

her: she alone can make it genuine and durable; she alone knows how to blend mirth and sport with serious and important business; amusement with application.' (1997: 96)

The first song is set up as an underpinning for a second: Mentor-Minerva then proceeds to play the lyre herself, singing in order of propriety: first of Jupiter, of Minerva (wisdom), of Narcissus (the perils of vanity) and of Adonis (the perils of beauty) (1997: 96-7). The generic, non-threatening sea-beasts are insignificant, saturated with another set of lessons and reflections, this time within the context of songs, where the framework explicitly invites exegesis by the characters and the reader, and where the author also reflects on the need for 'amusement with application'.

Similarly, the Cyclopes are also mentioned, though this too is purely in passing, for contextual detail: 'A great number of officers therefore were immediately set to work in iron, steel and brass...The hammer thundered on the anvil...so that one would have thought he was in that isle where Vulcan, animating the Cyclops, forges thunderbolts' (1997: 151). Philoctetes recounts his dealings with Odysseus to Telemachus later on, where he refers to the skin of the Nemean lion and the arrows dipped in the blood of the Hydra (1997: 182-3) but this is as objects, and he does not discuss the origins of these materials any further. These scattered references throughout the novel do not have an impact in the larger scheme of the work, but they do invite the reader to recall these episodes, invoke the experience of having encountered them, and signpost Fénelon's intertextuality and the need to understand these allusions. Even these piecemeal references are being used for a didactic end. Yet the limitation of these fantastical creatures illustrates that the Modern comments regarding the inherent childishness of these elements had some bearing on Fénelon. The features that had transitioned into *The Adventures of Telemachus* – the adventure framework, the humanoid characters – are explained by this, as is the lack of repetition of the Laestrygonians, Polyphemus, Scylla and Charybdis. In terms of imparting useful knowledge to young readers, these were not the most beneficial selections.

Instead, Fénelon had turned to two specifically Odyssean loci, which illustrate the transformation of the *Odyssey* with a Modern, moderating influence. The opening on Calypso's island had already drawn a picture of the dangers of beauty and sensual pleasure, and the Underworld and Ithaca were also selected for their ability to reinforce narrative lessons in the closing third of the work. Telemachus' *katabasis* is drawn partly

in a Virgilian light: the entrance to the Underworld is in a cavern, at the base of a citadel (1997: 216, cf. *Aen.* 6.42, and of course Plato's cave, *Republic* 7. 514a–517a); Fénelon's Stygian lake is also free from bird song (1997: 217; *Aen.* 6.242–3) and the foot of the throne of Pluto and Proserpine are:

'...pale devouring Death...black Care, cruel Jealousy; Revenge, all dropping with blood, and covered with wounds; unjust Hatred, and Avarice that preys upon itself; Despair, that tears itself with its own hands; mad Ambition, that overturns each object in its way; Treachery that thirsts for blood, and cannot enjoy the mischief it hath done; Envy, which scatters its mortal poison all around, and is transported with rage at its inability to do mischief; Impiety, which digs for itself a bottomless pit, into which it plunges without hope...' (1997: 220)

These anthropomorphisations reflect the similar horrors guarding the entrance to Virgil's Underworld (e.g. Grief, Revenge, Old Age, Disease, Fear, Hunger, Poverty, Death, Pain, Sleep and War, *Aen.* 6.274–9). With the exception of Death, Fénelon's are less practical concerns, but instead character vices that can be overcome by individuals (and particularly kings). Like Aeneas, Telemachus sees the three judges (including Minos) and a parade of nameless kings. The parade is grouped by character rather than chronology – for example, kings who abused their power, making it in this sense more like the Odyssean parade of women, who are loosely grouped by their actions, and their contributions to mythological dynasties (*Od.* 11.235–330). However, regardless of classical sources, the *katabasis* has been thoroughly Christianized: there are no sacrifices or rituals that Telemachus must undertake for entry, which has instead been secured by Minerva. Telemachus' descent becomes a negative exemplum like Fénelon's earlier *Fables* – the vices of mankind drawn into sharper critical focus through the exposure to events and people in a remote and unfamiliar territory. The author heightens the didactic content of the episode: where Ulysses learns of his mother's fate, his future, and the fate of his Homeric allies, Telemachus' lessons have consequences not only for himself, but for his future subjects. Fénelon's belief that the Homeric poems spoke simply and that they did not offer the highest morals saw him sidestep some of these criticisms by instead using the poem to speak allegorically about the French court, and strengthening the position of the *Odyssey* in light of Modern criticism.

The final Odyssean site is used to make Fénelon's own moral messages even more explicit. Telemachus returns to the coast of Ithaca at the same time as his father.



Meeting him, Ulysses hides his identity in a manner consistent with his Homeric counterpart, creating a fictional identity. When Mentor-Minerva reveals that the man they had met was in fact Ulysses, Telemachus expresses his frustration. In the final part, Mentor gives an extended speech over several pages, reflecting on the lessons learnt over the course of Telemachus' voyage, and how he can use them upon his full reunion with his father and homeland:

'I have led you, as it were, by the hand through shipwrecks, unknown lands, bloody wars, and all the disasters that the heart of man can encounter. I have shewn you by facts, of which you are a witness, the consequences of the true and false maxims adopted in government: and your errors have been no less serviceable to you than your misfortunes. For, who is the man that can pretend to rule a people wisely, who has never suffered, nor ever profited by the sufferings which his errors have occasioned? Like your father, you have filled both sea and land with your disastrous adventures. Go, you are now worthy of having him for your model... When you ascend the throne, let the great object of your ambition be, to renew the golden age. Let your ears be open to everyone, but let your confidence be confined to a few. Beware of trusting too much to your own judgement, and thereby deceiving yourself: but when you have committed [sic] a mistake, be not afraid that it should be known. Love your people; and neglect nothing that may tend to their affection...Always weigh beforehand the consequences of every thing you undertake. Endeavour to foresee the greatest misfortunes that may happen; and know, that true courage consists in viewing danger at a distance, and despising it, when it cannot be avoided: for he that avoids thinking of it beforehand, it is to be feared will not have courage to support the sight of it when present; whereas, he who foresees all that can happen, who prevents all that can be prevented, and calmly encounters what cannot be eschewed, alone deserves the character of wise and magnanimous.' (1997: 299-300)

For Fénelon, it is the notion of the Odyssean voyage that is pedagogically beneficial, and not the fantastic encounters – but this passage suggests a potential future reading of the *Odyssey* itself in a didactic light. The most revealing part of this passage is the suggestion that Telemachus is now 'worthy' of his father as model – several of the lessons that Fénelon outlines could be applied to a reading of the Homeric poem. The disguised Odysseus has 'ears open to everyone' when trying to re-establish himself in Ithaca, but only confides in his son, Eumaeus and Philoetius; his trust in his companions with the box of winds, and the cattle of Helios will prove perilous; his positive treatment of his

faithful subjects is related by Eumaeus, who calls his a 'dear master' (κεδνοῖο ἄνακτος) (*Od.* 14.170). Circe's warnings mean that Odysseus has been given foresight of some of what will happen, whilst a situation that 'cannot be eschewed' – the encounter with Polyphemus, is overcome by Odysseus' thought and calm leadership – the characteristics of a 'wise' and 'magnanimous' person. *The Adventures of Telemachus* may be making concessions to criticisms of the Moderns, but Fénelon finishes his work by pointing his reader towards the qualities that Telemachus has learnt that make him like his father, and directing him towards the Homeric poem.

With such a demonstrable range of influences, it seems easy to question the role of the *Odyssey* in *The Adventures of Telemachus*. However, the Homeric poem is both the framework for and driving force of *Telemachus*. There are three central points to make in this regard: first, the variety of ancient lands portrayed (whether originally featured in Homer or other classical works) is enabled by the influence of the *Odyssey*, which demands that travel should play a fundamental part to authors choosing to reinterpret it. Yet rather than choosing to create entirely original adventures for Telemachus, Fénelon makes a concerted choice to revisit particular episodes depicted by Homer in the *Odyssey* (Calypso's island, the Underworld, the coast of Ithaca where Odysseus is first reunited with his homeland) in a deliberate attempt to frame his narrative in light of the *Odyssey* as opposed to any other text, but also because of their recreational value. Second, the novel is tightly framed within the constraints of the Homeric poem, being careful not to make obvious narrative contradictions between the two texts and working within the expectations of contemporary readers, i.e. Telemachus returns to Ithaca to be reunited with his father, rather than settle in a foreign land, as is offered to him. Third, and most importantly, it is the two central characters that link the structure of the novel with its central themes, which puts the *Odyssey* at the very heart of the text. The relationship of Telemachus and Mentor-Minerva is the author's didactic vehicle: this Odyssean instrument is the means of putting the value of the merits of simple Ithacan life (cf. *Od.* 4.605–10, Telemachus' description of Ithaca to Menelaus) at the forefront of the novel as the ultimate aspiration for Fénelon's readers in seventeenth-century France. The relationship between the two characters can be read on macro and micro levels: the lessons which arise from Telemachus' experiences, though ostensibly concerned with good governance and leadership for the benefits of the Duke, could easily be applicable to a wider audience. Riley 2001: 82 argues that Fénelon promoted

'simplicity, labor, the virtues of agriculture, the absence of luxury and splendor, and the elevation of peace over war and aggrandizement', similarly to the classically pastoral influences of *On the Education of Girls*. Although it was nominally a private lesson, these sentiments expressed by Fénelon were actually aspirations to which all people, regardless of status, could relate.

Riley 2001: 82 notes that the focus on peace and simple living 'led Louis XIV, of course, to read *Telemachus* as a satire on his luxuriousness and bellicosity'. Fénelon's troubles were surely compounded by the fact that it was Mentor who was the mouthpiece of the majority of these views, and arguably the real hero of the novel; with his 'pupil' being the prince Telemachus, obvious parallels could be made between these characters, and Fénelon and the Duke of Burgundy respectively. Though the work was supposedly never intended for publication, and was a form of didactic entertainment for the young duke alone, in Louis XIV's eyes, the voice of the educator had too much authority. From the point of view of the monarch, the lessons contained were neither innocent nor inconsequential for the heir to the throne: the *Odyssey* provided a structure and a thin veneer for Fénelon's views on the monarchy, and therefore caused controversy. Fénelon had already been exiled from the French court a year after the novel had been presented to the young duke, for his involvement in Quietism – a movement that encouraged an introspective, and personal approach to religious worship, which as a result had been declared heretical by Rome. Despite the claims of its author that it had been leaked by an unfaithful copyist (*Correspondance*, 1827: 248), the political damage was too great. The way in which Fénelon chose to develop the humanist allegorical approaches to the Homeric poem in his own Odyssean adventure meant that *The Adventures of Telemachus* would see this exile from court being made permanent.

Fénelon's work, which has already based itself on a poem that was morally and educationally questionable, challenged the contemporary remit of children's literature, but also by extension the highest political authority in the land. The debate over this remit, particularly whether children should be fastidiously prescribed their learning, or learn to become independently critical and imaginative (which Perrault had hinted at in his disparaging comments on the *Odyssey*) would become increasingly important in the eighteenth century. The king never forgave Fénelon, who was forbidden from leaving his diocese, but as Chilton 1997: xxii notes, the ensuing scandal of Fénelon's exile did

not last long – *The Adventures of Telemachus* became a phenomenon across Europe. It is difficult to speculate as to the proportion of child versus adult readers of *Telemachus* through the 1700s,<sup>41</sup> but the democratic sentiments expressed by Fénelon demonstrated such power as to influence Pope, Voltaire, and Rousseau, amongst other writers and thinkers of the Enlightenment. One of the most radically influential works concerning children’s education in the eighteenth century, Rousseau’s *Émile: or, On Education* saw the eponymous protagonist being given *Robinson Crusoe* to read as a child, then Fénelon’s *Telemachus* on reaching adolescence, such was its influence and position of esteem in the eyes of an author who was notoriously fastidious about literature. Fénelon’s pedagogical work was being considered important enough to make a transition into an adult readership, despite its dual purpose to both inform and entertain children. Britain was undergoing significant changes in publishing practice both technologically and culturally at the time, which would lead it to be a print-dependent economy by the end of the eighteenth century (Feather 2007), and as part of this there was clear demand amongst the upper and middle classes for Fénelon’s *Odyssey*. Its wide dissemination would help to influence authors who would themselves go on to democratise children’s literature, and in particular the *Odyssey*, for the lower classes.

v. The reception of *The Adventures of Telemachus* in England

Whilst Fénelon’s work was the product of contemporary educational theories specifically aimed at children, it was, in fact, transitional in its readership, which was one reason for its success. Although nominally aimed at a private audience, its ability to cross into a still nascent public (and adult) readership of literary material for children which was hungry for new vehicles both for entertainment and instruction reflected a new consumer power. In the late seventeenth-century, ordinary readers began to gain a voice in the production of literature, as DeJean 1997: 57 notes:

‘Between 1670 and 1687, a major change had taken place in the literary world. A new public had been created for literature, invented

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<sup>41</sup> Bottigheimer 2003: 172 argues that despite gaining the attention of an adult readership, that its success owes no small part to its use by ‘generations of schoolboys, who constituted a self-renewing reader-and buyer-ship’, though her sources for this are not cited.

by the gesture that made readers of literature literary critics. Readers, not scholarly or specialist readers, but a literary public, had begun to decide that they had a stake in the production of literature – that they were competent to decide what types of works should be produced and how these works should be interpreted.’

*The Adventures of Telemachus* was an example of the reading public in Europe demonstrating this stake in literature: a work which had faced the disapproval of the King of France was being produced due to a demand inflamed by the difficult and scandalous circumstances of its production. As a result, Fénelon’s work also illustrates the broadening of literary audiences: Atkinson and Keller 1971: 20 claim there were over fifty prints of *Telemachus* between 1699–1700 in France – though the size of the printings is unknown, they argue that if every member of the book-buying nobility had purchased one that ‘commoners’ (a term broadly applied to anyone not of noble birth, but not necessarily without means) must have too. Given the extremely limited nature of the nominal audience for the work, and its often erudite content and themes, Fénelon’s treatment of the *Odyssey* managed to make a remarkable crossover: an elite author’s work for a (very specific) elite audience was being disseminated amongst lower classes. This turned out to be a significant factor in creating the conditions for children’s literature to flourish, and to become a commercial entity in its own right.

The key transition was the spread of *The Adventures of Telemachus* on the continent, which undoubtedly owed a debt to the illustrious positions held by its author, the ensuing attention his status gave him, and the scandal sparked by the conflict between his personal values and public duties. After the initial leak of the French text to The Hague in 1699, Part I of the work appeared in an English translation by Isaac Littlebury only a few months later, under the auspices of Awnsham and John Churchill in London (a Dutch translation would not appear until 1700).<sup>42</sup> The same publishers had already been responsible for bringing John Locke’s *Some Thoughts Concerning Education* to the market. Due to the widespread success of Fénelon’s work, further volumes to complete this translation were in circulation by 1700, and the publishers made another five reprints within ten years (Bottigheimer 2003: 174). At least another eighteen translations were published in Britain and Ireland between 1699 and 1800, with a further six published throughout the nineteenth-century, not to mention numerous

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<sup>42</sup> *De gevallen van Telemachus, soone van Ulysses*, trans. D. Ghys, Utrecht: Hermanus Ribbius; The Hague: Adriaen Moetjens.

reprints (see Appendix). The public were drawn to the *Odyssey* via Fénelon's work – yet the reception of *The Adventures of Telemachus* was configured differently in England compared to its homeland.

Upon its arrival in England, *The Adventures of Telemachus* also carried with it some of the circulating criticism of the Moderns. The Quarrel would have resounding contemporary influence in England, where the same themes were explored, inspired directly by the clash across the Channel: the equivalent English debate would be named, 'The Battle of the Books', after a 1704 prologue written by Jonathan Swift. An anonymous pamphlet entitled *Critical Remarks Upon The Adventures of Telemachus, Son of Ulysses* also was translated from French and published in English in 1700, would carry the Modern arguments that the work was full of 'fabulous Beauties fit only to amaze Fools, or to divert Children' (1700: 22) across the Channel. Taking a similar form to a Socratic dialogue, the pamphlet provides an insight into both the immediacy of its phenomenal success, but also how audiences beyond Fénelon's remit perceived the work. The author begins by outlining its success:

'I tell you over and over again, all People look upon *Telemachus* to be an admirable Piece: Never did Hero appear upon the Stage with such universal applause. 'Tis witty, delicate, natural, 'tis mysterious and enchanting [sic]; what would you have more?' (1700: 1)

The scale and consistency of the reception of Fénelon's work is made clear: even if the author is exaggerating only to tear the work down, the effect of his argument depends upon the familiarity of the statement that the work received 'universal applause'. More significant, however, is the notion that the work is 'mysterious and enchanting', as both sides agree that 'this is the Part which makes his Reputation soar so high' (1700: 34). In the wider world, away from his pupil's private reading, Fénelon's didactic work was being described as 'fabulous' and a 'Romance', and according to adult conceptions of literary standards. Romance is dangerous territory, as the critic regards fiction as a whole to be a minefield for the young, hinting at a particular ire reserved for stories that draw on fanciful travel and allegory:

'You yourself have told me a Hundred times, that the Labours of Fiction are poyson'd Springs, from whence young People know not how to draw, without interesting the Exactness of Discernment, and

without receiving dangerous Impressions against the uprightness of the Soul. Poets and Writers of Romances never speak like other Men, being forc'd to follow another Road than [sic] that of Nature, to arrive at that sublimity which they seek for in themselves, they overdo what ever they go about. The Fire of Imagination, in them, supplies the place of profound Reasoning.' (1700: 5)

Unlike Perrault, who referred to children and childhood purely as part of a derogatory attack, this critic uses child-centric arguments by implying that children could be damaged by fiction (although he echoes the sentiments of Plato on the same subject). Moreover, the critic characterises *The Adventures of Telemachus* as primarily a romance, an adventure narrative – even suggesting that the didactic messages were simply not explicit enough because of the imaginative framework the author had used. The adventure framework was weaponized against Fénelon. In a wider readership, the Quarrel would continue to pit the imaginative and sublime elements of Fénelon's work against reality and reason: however, these Modern criticisms did not resonate fully with the English public.

*Critical Remarks Upon The Adventures of Telemachus* appears to have been printed only once in England. This is explained partly by the geographical and political separation of the two states: English readers were able to appreciate the aspects which made it a *roman-a-clef* in the eyes of French audiences, but as they were less politically invested in this particular reading than the native readership (although of course, it still held its scandalous appeal as an attempt to reform the monarch), the more universal qualities of the text took prominence in critical reviews. The anonymous pamphlet may have had some distribution in English, yet in the course of its damning critique, it also inadvertently highlights the very reasons why *The Adventures of Telemachus* was so popular in England. The participants in the French *querelle* had taken fundamental issue with the ancient world itself, which was not the case for their English counterparts. As Norman 2011: 33 argues, English neoclassical critics were occupied with 'originality versus poetic rules':

'There was no wish to decry the achievements of antiquity as such. Rather there was the instinctive veneration of originality which sought its poetic examples either in the earliest of ancient poets, or in the native woodnotes of the English tradition.' (2011: 36)

As a veneration of the Homeric poems, and especially the *Odyssey*, *The Adventures of Telemachus* had a naturally more receptive audience, and less inflammatory reception in England, where the trust in authors of remote generations was less contentious. By the mid-eighteenth century, the broad early success of Fénelon's work appeared to feed back into the *Odyssey* itself. Joseph Warton in early journal *The Adventurer* praised the poem for its universality beyond the royal sphere:

[The *Iliad*] may be called the "Manual of Monarchs," whereas the patience, the prudence, the wisdom, the temperance, the fortitude of Ulysses, afford a pattern, the utility of which is not confined within the compass of courts and palaces, but descends and diffuses its influence over the common life and daily practice. If the fairest examples ought to be placed before us in an age prone to imitation, if patriotism be preferable to implacability, if an eager desire to return to one's country and family be more manly and noble than an eager desire to be revenged of an enemy, then should our eyes rather be fixed on Ulysses than Achilles.' (1753: 26)

The lessons outlined by *The Adventures of Telemachus* – patience, prudence, wisdom, temperance, fortitude, patriotism, and restraint from bellicosity – were now perceived in the *Odyssey*, even though the Homeric poem is fundamentally concerned with both revenge (on the Suitors and their collaborators) and on kingship – as earlier readers of the poem had clearly seen. These were not simply the generic humanistic lessons of Erasmus, who had been concerned solely with the education of the elite: neither the Homeric poem, nor Fénelon's work were mirror for princes any longer. The *Odyssey*, enabled by Fénelon's work, was for all readers, going beyond the courts to influence 'common life' – and especially 'young scholars' (1753: 26), according to Warton, who insisted they should 'peruse it early and attentively' (26) for its morals (26, 29–30), patriotism (27) and domesticity (28). However, it is no longer sufficient to promote the *Odyssey* solely on this moralistic and didactic basis. Warton adds that there are three additional reasons why the *Odyssey* is:

'...equally if not superior to the *Iliad*, and why it is a poem most peculiarly proper for the perusal of youth; are, because the great variety of events and scenes it contains interest and engage the attention more than the *Iliad*; because characters and images drawn from familiar life, are more useful to the generality of readers, and are also more difficult to be drawn; and because the conduct of this poem,



considered as the most perfect of Epopæäs, is more artful and judicious than that of the other.’ (30)

Fénelon’s *The Adventures of Telemachus* is the *Odyssey* refashioned as a morality tale about travel for the ‘entertainment’ and ‘instruction’ of children. To Warton, making these remarks about the propriety of the poem for a young readership over half a century later, the *Odyssey* appears more suitable than the *Iliad* for a young audience, as it is defined as not being about kingship and revenge – despite the reality that these two themes dominate the *Odyssey*. Whilst the appeals to ‘artful and judicious conduct’ overlap with the earlier moral arguments, the idea that the *Odyssey* speaks more meaningfully to everyday life would be crucial to the development of the poem for young readers. Fénelon’s work had begun this process by connecting the *Odyssey* to the likely experiences of a single child, but had achieved both success and controversy by creating a work that was perceived to be an allegory of aspects of the French court. The ability of the poem to speak to the real world became the recurring theme in reviews of Fénelon’s work. An English translation of Antoine Prevost’s *Mémoires et aventures d’un homme de qualité* (*The Memoirs and Adventures of the Marquis du Bretagne, and Duc d’Harcourt; or, the Wonderful Vicissitudes of Fortune*) (1743) by Andrew Erskine used Fénelon to suggest where the potential for children’s literature lay:

‘Mr. Fenelon [sic] makes Mentor conduct his young Hero through a Course of imaginary Adventures, whereas our Author accompanies a young Nobleman in real Travels, attended with such Variety of Events, that Scarce any Accident can happen to a Traveller, but what he may here find a parallel Case, with admirable directions how to extricate himself out of Difficulties.’ (1743: vii)

Fénelon’s work was only surpassed by the verisimilitude of Prevost’s tale, which Erskine argues:

‘...ought certainly to fall into the Hands of every young Nobleman and Gentleman who are entering upon the Stage of Life, and particularly those who travel in foreign Countries, to whom it will be an [sic] useful as well as agreeable Vade Mecum. But what renders this Work complete in it’s [sic] kind is, that the Fair Sex, besides the Entertainment of agreeable Reading, may learn, from the fatal Experience of others, how carefully they ought to guard their Hearts against Love Engagements, from which they can expect nothing but

Disappointments that will render them miserable and wretched.’  
(1743: vii–iii)

The English literary landscape was becoming primed not only for an independent children’s literature, but tales of travel based in reality, and significantly, aimed at both sexes. The idea that tales of travel could act as a ‘Vade Mecum’ – a handbook, or useful object carried on one’s person – would be metaphorically resonant in the late nineteenth century, where knowledge of the *Odyssey* represented status, morality and imperial ambition. Here, Fénelon is deemed weaker than tales rooted in real experience, though the French text lacks canonical authority at this point: despite this, the comparison is a superlative one, where Prevost’s work supersedes the excellence of Fénelon. The advocacy of Prevost by Erskine uses *The Adventures of Telemachus* as an established point of reference, and the suggestion that Prevost’s work can improve on this means that such comments are somewhat faint criticism of Fénelon – but they are indicative of a cultural shift in the eighteenth century. As the humanists had praised the *Odyssey*, it appeared to be lauded for its pedagogical potential – but in the latter half of the eighteenth century, *The Adventures of Telemachus* no longer appeared to be the sublime classical adventure that the Modern critics had seen: in fact, concessions to Perrault and the writers of fairy tales – in particular, the focus on moralisation and didactic learning through literature, had directed it away from epic, and the imaginative powers provoked by the genre. As a result, the role of the *Odyssey* in Fénelon’s work was displaced by questions that were apparently more fundamental regarding the poetic and moral merit of the poem – questions that continue to be filtered through Fénelon.

*The Adventures of Telemachus* continued to be a successful publication right through the latter half of the eighteenth century in England – but how it was read became increasingly unstable because of how it was perceived in light of the Homeric poem. As the number of translations of *The Adventures of Telemachus* grew, specific translations became benchmarks – in particular, that of John Hawkesworth (1768). Though there appear to be few reviews of the early translations, late eighteenth-century review journals took the worth and admiration of Fénelon’s work for granted, but they also acknowledged Fénelon’s transformative effect on the *Odyssey*, as *The Critical Review* of 1769: 171 demonstrates:

'In Telemachus we admire a work which may be strictly termed 'Art's fairest offspring.' Just and natural in its plan, abounding with reflections drawn from the stores of nature and experience, conveyed in diction the most refined and elegant, it may be stiled the Manual of Princes with more propriety than even the book which first acquired the title. In respect, however, of poetick merit, it is really defective; nor do we hazard much when we assert, that the strength of Fenelon [sic] lay more in the powers of reasoning than in the powers of imagination. Of this, his conduct shews himself to have been well aware. His speeches are numerous and generally long, whilst his descriptions are few, and usually short; - and even in those, he is evidently the poet of the books more than of nature...In a word, let us freely acknowledge Telemachus to be a work of much entertainment and much instruction; but let us leave it to professed panegyrists and chevalier Ramsays <sup>43</sup> to rank it with the poem of Homer or of Virgil.' <sup>44</sup>

Where *The Critical Review* reveals a conflict is in relation to the 'poetick merit' that can be found in the ancients themselves, and is perceived as lacking in this text for a young reader. Erskine had praised Fénelon for his imagination in 1743, but by the end of the century, the merit associated with 'the powers of imagination' is found wanting. *The Adventures of Telemachus* is being measured not only as literature for the young, but against the *Odyssey* itself: the bemoaning of a lack of 'imagination' expressing the discernable absence of the fantastic qualities of the Homeric poem. It is not only qualitative concerns that denote the lack of 'poetick merit', as noted by *The Monthly Review*, who outlined further perceptions in September 1795: 24-5:

'The merit of Archbishop's Telemachus having been long established in Europe, we shall only observe, that it is still disputed, among some Critics, under what denomination that excellent work should pass. Some maintain, that the Telemachus is a mere Romance, written, indeed, in the spirit of antiquity, but no poem: while the Chevalier Ramsay, and others, contend that it is a poem, and only wanting in Numbers to make it a compleat Epic...What the world admires in Fenelon is his language.' <sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup> Andrew Ramsay, a Scottish writer who published an edition of *The Adventures of Telemachus* in 1717.

<sup>44</sup> On the translation of Hawkesworth: 'The Adventures of Telemachus the Son of Ulysses. Translated from the French', *Critical Review*, 1769: 170-8.

<sup>45</sup> 'A New Translation of Telemachus, in English Verse. By Gibbons Bagnall, Vicar of Home-Lacy', *Monthly Review*, 1795: 24-5.

The 'Numbers' that the reviewer refers to are the poetic formalities, primarily metre, that were pitted against the originality of poets. *The Adventures of Telemachus* was being judged against technical as well as artistic criteria. The lack of critical consensus over the way in which Fénelon's work is to be read partially explains the lack of a version of the *Odyssey* for children before the nineteenth century, even as technology and readerships began to develop. Despite its origins, only one of the English reviews concerns itself with Fénelon's work as a work intended for a child to read: rather, these adult reviewers are more concerned with holding *The Adventures of Telemachus* to the same standards as other kinds of literature.

Fénelon's work began as a mirror for princes, but at the dawn of the nineteenth century, his use of the adventure framework was not enough to begin the process of characterisation of the *Odyssey* as an adventure story. The principles underlying Fénelon's work would be fundamental for how the *Odyssey* would develop independently in children's literature. Dussud 2010: 89 describes how Fénelon created – 'les habits neufs de l'*Odysée*' – 'the new clothes of the *Odyssey*'. Fénelon had dressed the *Odyssey* differently for subsequent generations by turning it into a travel-centric tale, and making it of particular relevance to children. In the century that followed, the imagination, romance, and the sublimity of the poem that underpinned Fénelon's work would be exploited and put under different critical tests. Fénelon, and the political and social developments of the nineteenth century, meant that the *Odyssey* was no longer about or for kings, despite the intended audience of *The Adventures of Telemachus*. The *Odyssey*, as a result of Fénelon's work, was ready to become a widespread commercial entity – specifically in the next definitive version of the *Odyssey* for children, which was Charles Lamb's *The Adventures of Ulysses* (1808). By the time of Lamb, attitudes to children, childhood and children's literature had undergone a sea-change which meant that the appeal of the fantastic episodes which both the Ancients and the Moderns had been so wary of was more easily reconciled with the didactic concerns of the children's publishing industry. In fact, Fénelon would not be reckoned fantastic enough by these new standards, particularly in relation to the *Odyssey*: a change in attitude that prepared the ground for Lamb.

## Part II: Straining the imagination: The development of Lamb's *The Adventures of Ulysses*

*The Adventures of Telemachus* – and with it, the *Odyssey* – was at the heart of intellectual and pedagogical discourse that influenced the ‘rapidity of “invention” of children’s literature’ (to use Grenby’s phrase 2009: 5). Less than a century after the publication of Fénelon’s Odyssean treatise on kingship, recreational literature written specifically for children had grown so substantially that complaints about the proliferation of such works began to rise. Whilst the notion of a separate literature for children was still novel in 1750, already by 1780, the educationalist Sarah Trimmer could comment: ‘it may seem superfluous to add to the number of Books which have already been written expressly for the use of Children’ (1780: v). By the end of the century, another early commentator on children’s literature, Hannah More, would complain that ‘real knowledge and real piety’ suffered as a direct result of ‘the profusion of little, amusing, sentimental books with which the youthful library overflows’ (1799: 170).<sup>46</sup> Despite the controversy surrounding Fénelon in his own time, such protests reflect a concern that a grand *volte-face* has taken place, from didactically-rich works to a state of affairs where it can be said that literature for children is so ‘amusing’ that it lacks ‘real knowledge’. As explored, the tension between didactic and recreational agendas was present long before these late eighteenth-century critics, but as children’s literature developed commercially, these tensions were magnified.

The pivotal issue at the end of the eighteenth century was articulated by critics and concerned ancient literature: the Ancients and the Moderns argued over whether classical literature in its entirety was unsuitable for children. By contrast, by the early 1800s, the question of whether valuable knowledge from classical literature was being diluted by recreational reading was much more central – and it concerned not classical literature per se but specifically children’s literature. As a result, the *Odyssey* for children would continue to be moulded by this tension between the two pedagogical agendas, except this time it was more concerned with the relative merits of different portions of the Homeric poem, and the specifics of the text, rather than the value of ancient literature or ‘the classical tradition’ as a whole. The most significant work to engage with the poem for children of the nineteenth century – Charles Lamb’s *The*

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<sup>46</sup> For more on the development of children’s literature in the eighteenth-century, see Grenby 2009.

*Adventures of Ulysses* – was, in part, a direct response to Fénelon, but also an exercise in negotiating the pressures exerted on those writing specifically for children in a dedicated market. The result was a version of the poem that revolutionized the way in which subsequent generations would conceptualize the *Odyssey*, in its adventure-rich storytelling.

i. Adventures in the Juvenile Library

Behind *The Adventures of Ulysses* were not one, but two men: its author, Charles Lamb (essayist and author, born 1775) and its editor and publisher, William Godwin (born 1756). Godwin is today often overshadowed by his family and colleagues, as the husband of feminist Mary Wollstonecraft (herself an educationalist and writer for children), father of Mary Shelley, father-in-law to Percy Bysshe Shelley, and friend to many of the great writers of the age, including Wordsworth, Coleridge, and the literary critic William Hazlitt. Though now eclipsed by the younger generation, it was Godwin who brought many of these figures together:<sup>47</sup> he was a radical writer and proto-anarchist political philosopher, who had strong convictions when it came to education. As a leader in this group, Godwin's educational ideologies were disseminated at the heart of both the first and second generations of English Romantic writers.<sup>48</sup> His 1797 work *The Enquirer* outlines the central tenets of his philosophy of education, which were the promotion of independence in the child (1797: 53),<sup>49</sup> protection from the coercion of adults, and the development of a free consciousness (1797: 60).<sup>50</sup> As one of the most influential eighteenth-century publications concerning education, Fénelon's *The Adventures of Telemachus* wielded a significant influence over Godwin, particularly

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<sup>47</sup> Percy Shelley had sought out a meeting with Godwin, which would eventually lead to his elopement with Godwin's daughter, Mary (Smith 1877: 48–50).

<sup>48</sup> An extensive exploration of the political, religious, and personal context of Godwin's educational views can be found in the 2008 thesis by Roy. This chapter explores some of his motivations simultaneously as they unfold in relation to classical literature and specifically, Lamb's work.

<sup>49</sup> 'Children, it is said, are free from the cares of the world. Are they without their cares? Of all cares those that bring with them the greatest consolation, are the cares of independence... But of all the sources of unhappiness to a young person the greatest is a sense of slavery. How grievous the insult, or how contemptible the ignorance, that tells a child that youth is the true season of felicity, when he feels himself checked, controlled, and tyrannised over in a thousand ways?' (1797: 66)

<sup>50</sup> 'It is perhaps impossible for the young to be conducted without introducing in many cases the tyranny of implicit obedience. Go there; do that; read; write; rise; lie down; will perhaps for ever be the language addressed to youth by age. In private education there is a danger that this superintendence should extend to too many particulars. The anxiety of individual affection watches the boy too narrowly, controls him too much, renders him too poor a slave. In public education there is comparative liberty.' (1797: 60)

in those of his novels that tried to incorporate Godwin's own philosophy of education into his fictional writing. Fénelon's work was also an influence on Godwin in a political capacity: Allen 2007: 1–2 argues that *The Adventures of Telemachus* played a significant role in the development of Godwin's most famous work, *Political Justice*.

When it came to issues of curriculum, Godwin's pedagogical attitudes were rooted in classical literature: from the age of seventeen, he had attended Hoxton Academy, one of a group of radical institutions set up as alternative educational establishments for Dissenters.<sup>51</sup> Here, he was taught under Dr. Kippis, a renowned philologist who provided a curriculum in which classics played a central part, alongside Godwin's own private study where, in his own words, 'there was not a day passed in which I did not read a portion, first of the Greek, then of the Roman classics, another part of the day was appropriated to metaphysics, theology...and so forward' (Paul 1876a: 356). Godwin's avid, and more significantly, recreational, reading of classical literature would form an important foundation for his later enterprises in education, but particularly children's publishing. In one essay from *The Enquirer*, entitled 'Of the Study of the Classics', Godwin discusses the merits of a classical education specifically with an eye on the next generation:

'A question which has of late given rise to considerable discussion is, whether the study of classics ought to form part of the education of youth? In the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries the very proposal of such a question would have been regarded as a sort of blasphemy. But in the present day inquisitive and active spirits are little inclined to take any thing upon trust.' (1797: 29)

Classical learning was hanging in the balance, and Godwin felt it needed protection. His eventual publication of *The Adventures of Ulysses* was already partly an enterprise of classical preservation, as well as a matter of personal belief.

When Godwin began to turn his pedagogic ideas to practical ends, he was also motivated by the landscape of children's literature as it had developed thus far: Godwin read many contemporary children's publications with a view to the education of his own children, and found them excessive in their moralising, being exactly the kind of

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<sup>51</sup> Paul 1876a: 356; Locke 1980: 17–8 explains that Dissenters were rejected from the traditional universities for their non-orthodox religious beliefs. For more on Godwin's background, see Woodcock 1946: 15.

coercion of the child he was so keen to avoid. In one letter to William Cole in 1802, he outlined the issues of the contemporary market:

'I have no difficulty in the initiatory part of the business. I think Mrs Barbauld's little books, four in number, admirably adapted, upon the whole, to the capacity and amusement of young children....I am most peremptorily of opinion against putting children extremely forward. If they desire it themselves, I would not baulk them, for I love to attend to these unsophisticated indications. But otherwise, *Festina lente* is my maxim in education. I think the worse consequences flow from overloading the faculties of children, and a forced maturity. We should always remember that the object of education is the future man or woman; and it is a miserable vanity that would sacrifice the wholesome and gradual development of the mind to the desire of exhibiting little monsters of curiosity.

As far as Mrs. Barbauld's books I have no difficulty. But here my judgement and the ruling passion of my contemporaries divide. They aim at cultivating one faculty, I should aim at cultivating another. A whimsical illustration of this occurred to me the other day in a silly bookseller, who was observing to me what a delightful book for children might be made, to be called "A Tour through Papa's House." The object of this book was to explain all the furniture, how carpets were made, the history & manufacture of iron, &c. &c. He was perfectly right: this is exactly the sort of writing for children which has lately been in fashion.

These people, as I have said, aim at cultivating one faculty, and I another. I hold that a man is not an atom less a man, if he lives and dies without the knowledge they are so desirous of accumulating in the heads of children. Add to which, these things may be learned at any age, while the imagination, the faculty for which I declare, if cultivated at all, must be begun with in youth. Without imagination there can be no genuine ardour in any pursuit, for any acquisition, and without imagination there can be no genuine morality, no profound feeling of other men's sorrow, no ardent and persevering anxiety for their interests. This is the faculty which makes the man, and not the miserable minuteness of detail about which the present age is so uneasy....' [March 2 1802] (Paul 1878b: 118-9)

This response to the state of the market showed Godwin mounting a defence of certain types of childhood reading before his own foray into children's publishing, His adversaries are implied in the anecdote of the bookseller who aspires to write the minutely-detailed account of 'A Tour through Papa's House': Godwin outlines the type of writing associated with the aforementioned Sarah Trimmer and Hannah More, as well as Anna Barbauld, who were renowned for taking a highly factual approach to children's



literature, with an emphasis on science. Though such publications were hugely successful, and despite favourable remarks concerning the works of Barbauld (as Roy 2008: 48–9 notes, a factor partly based on the fact that she, like Godwin, was from a Dissenter background), it was the imagination that Godwin saw as the heart of the educational value of children’s reading. Indeed it was, for Godwin, the very basis of character and morality, and further, it *had* to be introduced in youth to develop positive characteristics in the young: factual knowledge was stable and consistent, but also dangerous if applied incorrectly to the developing child. Fénelon had also used imagination as a means to a didactic end, but ideologically, it appeared to be Godwin’s primary concern. His maxim – *Festina lente*, ‘make haste slowly’, is a Latinization of the Greek *σπεῦδε βραδέως* mentioned in Suet. *Aug.* 25.4, and was popularized in later ages by Erasmus in *Adagia* II.1.1: it is in this humanist context that Godwin invokes the classical axiom regarding the damage that can be done to young minds that are subject to ‘overloading’. The result, according to Godwin, would be children whose rote-learning (with the purpose of parents ‘exhibiting’ their offspring for approval) would be interested in facts but without the critical faculties to assess them in context, which are encouraged by the imagination. Worst of all, the lack of exposure to the imagination breeds a lack of empathy, which needs to underpin society: ‘much-suffering’ Odysseus would become the very figure to whom Godwin and Lamb would turn to encourage feeling for mankind.

Godwin’s Library – founded in London in 1805 – was by no means a unique institution; rather, it was founded in response to other existing publishing enterprises devoted to young readers. Paul 2011: 16 identifies several publishers of children’s literature all working in central London throughout the 1700s, including those of John Newbery, Benjamin Tabart<sup>52</sup> and the joint venture of William Darton and Joseph Harvey. These houses produced grammars, histories, science books, biographies, poetry, and moral stories (Paul, 2011: 21, 42; Jackson, 1989: 103, 106–9). Godwin did not only see a gap in the market for stories to stimulate the imagination, but his decision to pursue imaginative tales was firmly based in his own educational beliefs, particularly those regarding classical education, which played an essential role in the founding of the

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<sup>52</sup> Tabart would act as publisher to some of Godwin’s own early writing for children (Moon 1990: 44). For a full account of Tabart’s publications see Moon 1990. Godwin’s second wife, Mary Jane Clairmont, had previously worked for Tabart as an editor and writer of children’s books (St. Clair, 1989: 282–3, Moon 1990: 43).

Juvenile Library. In the earlier letter to Cole, where he had outlined his educational principles, he goes on to recommend his own literary curriculum for children:

'I will put down the names of a few books, calculated to excite the imagination, and at the same time quicken the apprehensions of children. The best I know is a little French book, entitled 'Contes de ma Mere, or Tales of Mother Goose.' I should also recommend 'Beauty and the Beast', 'Fortunatus,' and a story of a Queen and a Country Maid in Fenelon's [sic] 'Dialogues of the Dead.' Your own memory will easily suggest to you others which would carry on this train, such as 'Valentine and Orson,' 'The Seven Champions of Christendom,' 'Les Contes de Madame Darmon,' 'Robinson Crusoe,' if weeded of its methodism [sic], and the 'Arabian Nights.' I would undoubtedly introduce before twelve years of age some smattering of geography, history, and the other sciences; but it is the train of reading I have here mentioned which I should principally depend on for generating an active mind and a warm heart.' (Paul 1878b: 118-9)

Not only does Godwin cite Fénelon, the *Contes* of Perrault (*Tales of Mother Goose*, *Beauty and the Beast*), chivalric romances such as *Valentine and Orson* and *The Seven Champions of Christendom*, but also Defoe's famous desert island tale. *Robinson Crusoe* was somewhat exceptional in its approval, garnering favour from all sides, but it was also featured in chapbooks<sup>53</sup> (of which *Fortunatus* was a German example), along with the *Arabian Nights*, and other, less universally approved, popular works of adventure (see Grenby 2007: 286; 2008: 39). These were the very tales that were the antithesis of the didactic children's literature produced by Trimmer and others – including Godwin's first wife, Mary Wollstonecraft. Wollstonecraft saw chapbooks as encouraging lower-class children to rely on chance and luck to better their lives, (Kelly 1991: 60-1); her own *Original Stories from Real Life* (1788), taught cautionary tales, which were designed, as the subtitle related, 'to regulate the affections and form the mind'.<sup>54</sup> In carrying over the advice from his letter to Cole, Godwin founded the Juvenile Library inspired by a potentially unsettling mixture of courtly tales, folk stories, and popular

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<sup>53</sup> For the most part chapbooks appear to be cheap, readily available printed works (ranging from pamphlets to full books), on a variety of subjects aimed at a young audience. However, it is a term coined after such printed materials had fallen out of use and is difficult to define. For more on this, see Grenby (2008: 32-3) who outlines the following characteristics: "Size, length, type, price, content, cultural associations and tone, and the mode by which it sold was all important, but none of these characteristics were in themselves the determining factor". Frequently, they used or abridged material from nursery rhymes, fairy tales, and chivalric romances.

<sup>54</sup> For more on Wollstonecraft's writing for children, see Kelly 1992: 29-34; Roy 2008.

fiction – a subversion made apparent in Godwin’s approval of the removal of certain doctrinal elements underpinning Defoe’s work. Most of all, there is a sense of orientation away from the contest of *la querelle*: though the turn-of-the-century moralists seemed to have disregarded both classical didacts and *contes de feés*, Godwin was happy to encompass both Fénelon and fairy tales without apparent conflict, using their common factor of imaginative appeal – it was his Odyssean publication with Lamb that most fully tested his pedagogical principles.

Godwin founded the Library with his second wife, Mary Jane Clairmont, a former editor of children’s books: he was himself commercially inexperienced and had little financial means or backing, but he was passionate about the project as it ‘not only provided a means of living, but provide[d] an opportunity of shaping the next generation’ (Marshall 1984: 266). Taking his radical reputation into consideration, Godwin did not feel it was viable to publish under his own name due to what Clemit 2009: 91 describes as his reputation for ‘sedition, atheism and sexual immorality’. Instead, he published under pseudonyms, the most notable of which was Edward Baldwin: it was under this guise that Godwin’s interest in promotion of a classical education could flourish. In 1805, he published *Fables Ancient and Modern* (based on Aesop), and *The Pantheon: or Ancient History of the Gods of Greece and Rome* in 1806. The latter was so successful that, as Marshall 1984: 269 notes, ‘it became the basic text on ancient mythology in schools and had gone through nine editions by 1836’ (and was one of John Keats’ first introductions to ancient Greek culture, paving the way for some of the most famously Hellenophile poetry in British literature).<sup>55</sup> Several of Godwin’s friends and associates were also regular contributors to the Library, and the most successful of these was Charles Lamb.

Lamb was an essayist and poet, who was introduced to Godwin at a dinner hosted by Samuel Taylor Coleridge in 1800 (Marrs 1975: 183).<sup>56</sup> A close friend of Lamb’s since their schooldays, Coleridge’s own writings outlined their classical

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<sup>55</sup> Clemit 2009: 95.

<sup>56</sup> ‘I am to sup with Coleridge to night –. Godwin will be there, whom I am rather curious to see’. Later, Lamb would write to Thomas Manning about their meeting: ‘Godwin I am a good deal pleased with –. He is a well-behaved decent man, nothing very brilliant about him or imposing as you may suppose; quite another Guess sort of Gentleman from what your Anti Jacobin Christians imagine him –. I was well please to fin he has neither horns nor claws, quite a tame creature I assure you. A middle–size man both in stature & in understanding – whereas from his noisy fame, you would expect to find a Briareus Centimanus or a Tityus tall enough to pull Jupiter from his Heavens!’ (Marrs 1975: 186). Lamb demonstrates the easy leaps he made from the imaginative world to the classical world in his description of Godwin.

curriculum at Christ's Hospital School, where the master, James Boyer, had tastes which eschewed the apparently derivative and trivial Roman authors for the authority of the Greeks, reflecting the nascent Hellenism which would become so closely associated with Lamb's generation.<sup>57</sup> Lamb left the school in the penultimate, or 'Deputy Grecian' year – the final 'Grecian' year would have seen him prepare to go to Oxford or Cambridge with an eventual career in the clergy, but a speech impediment prevented both of these paths. As a Deputy Grecian, he would have read the Greek Testament, Homer and Demosthenes, but his knowledge would have fallen short against that of his friends and peers who were 'full Grecians' – a self-consciousness that Lamb carried with him into adulthood.<sup>58</sup> Instead, he took a full-time job as a clerk at the burgeoning East India Company, who would underpin the economic and political establishment of the British Empire, having, as Punter 1989:7 notes, 'produced from a vast trading station a governed state'. Indeed, the eventual dissolution of the East India Company was one of the preceding factors in the establishment of British imperial control over India: following the Indian Rebellion in 1857, the British government passed the Government of India Act in 1858 which made provisions for the East India Company to be liquidated and its function to be handed over to the government, who established the British Raj. The company was formally dissolved in 1874, and Queen Victoria was crowned Empress of India in 1876 (Robins 2012: xvii-iii). As the next section of the thesis explores, the increasingly international world had an enduring role in the eventual legacy of Lamb's work.

Lamb's role at the East India Company meant that his contributions at the Juvenile Library were not his central source of income, but were nonetheless significant due to his personal responsibilities. Both Lamb, and his sister, Mary, had experienced enduring periods of mental illness, and after Mary had killed their mother during one such length of time, Charles became responsible for them both, moving her away from the rest of the family. Both Charles and Mary wrote for Godwin – their first combined

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<sup>57</sup> 'He moulded [their] taste to the preference of Demosthenes to Cicero, of Homer and Theocritus to Virgil, and again of Virgil to Ovid' (*Biographia Literaria*, 1817: 3). Courtney 1982: 48 argues that Lamb would have been able to read Caesar, Cicero, Virgil, Horace and Terence at sight and be able to compose Latin prose and verse.

<sup>58</sup> When writing to Charles Lloyd and his father, on the latter's translation of the *Odyssey*, he apologises for the delay of the return of the manuscript by explaining that he has asked for comments by 'a better Grecian' as his own knowledge of Greek is 'scanty' (Marrs 1978: 21). Though confident enough to offer some comment as a reader, he would only call himself 'homo unius linguae' (1978: 19) and 'a mere English reader' (1978: 47).

effort for children, *Tales from Shakespeare*, a prosaic adaptation of the playwright's work, was hugely successful – selling out immediately and becoming the most famous work of the Juvenile Library (it is still in print today). An appraisal in the *Critical Review* (1807: 97) claimed that in terms of instructing and entertaining young children, only *Robinson Crusoe* could match it.<sup>59</sup> Godwin and Lamb were keen to replicate the success of *Tales from Shakespeare* in their next project, which would be *The Adventures of Ulysses* (which is also still in print today): a deliberate attempt to produce an adaptation of something with the same canonical status and popular appeal.<sup>60</sup> Such ventures provided some extra income, but Lamb did not see his commissions for children, as has been argued by Plotz 2001: 89, simply as 'hack work'. Whilst the extra money was necessary (Lamb had to support his sister, and later, their ward, Emma Isola), he did not necessarily find these ventures easy to write,<sup>61</sup> and Lamb's concern for his literary reputation in these enterprises is reflected by a self-deprecating tone amongst his letters.<sup>62</sup> However, Lamb's financial dependence on such writing illustrates how children's literature had already become commercialised to a certain extent by this point; as a result, it might seem surprising that there was no other notably successful adaptation of the *Odyssey* for children from the end of the eighteenth century apart from the one Godwin himself was about to publish, and Fénelon's *Adventures of Telemachus*. Yet, as Godwin had expressed to Cole, the sensational aspects of the Homeric poem were likely to draw censure from existing children's writers and publishers, as now all types of imaginative fiction, whether classical or fairy tale, were under scrutiny. This only serves to highlight the trailblazing nature of Godwin and Lamb's endeavour – they put their faith (and Godwin's money), in the opposite 'faculty' to practical and factual didacticism, the imagination, which Godwin longed to cultivate in the young.

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<sup>59</sup> 'We have compared it with many of the numerous systems which have been devised for riveting attention at an early age, and insinuating knowledge subtly and pleasantly into minds, by nature averse from it. The result of the comparison is not so much that it rises high in the list, as that it claims the very first place, and stands unique, and without rival or competitor, unless perhaps we except Robinson Crusoe, with which it has one excellence in common, viz. that although adapted to instruct and interest the very young, it offers amusement to all ages.' (Marrs 1807: 97)

<sup>60</sup> 'The Shakspeare Tales suggested doing it.' (1808) (Marrs 1976: 272)

<sup>61</sup> As his sister Mary wrote to a friend, during the process of writing *Tales from Shakespeare*, Lamb was 'groaning all the while & saying he can make nothing of it, which he always says till he has finished and then he finds out he has made something of it.' (Marrs 1976: 229)

<sup>62</sup> One letter from Lamb to Wordsworth sees him say that Godwin 'cheated' him into allowing his name to be put to *Tales from Shakespeare*, ('which I did not mean, but do now repent, and then [Godwin] wrote a puff about their *simplicity*, &c. to go with the advertisement as in my name! Enough of this egregious dupery'). (1976: 256)

Lamb was famously not as conciliatory as Godwin when referring to those authors who took a didactic approach. Lamb wrote to Coleridge in 1802, expressing his frustrations about the factual ‘nonsense’ that was filling the shelves of children’s booksellers:

‘Mrs’ Barbauld[’s] stuff has banished all the old classics of the nursery; & the Shopman at Newbery’s hardly deign’d to reach them off an old exploded corner of a shelf, when Mary ask’d for them. Mrs. B’s and Mrs. Trimmer’s nonsense lay in piles about. Knowledge insignificant & vapid as Mrs. B’s books convey, it seems, must come to a child in the shape of knowledge, & his empty noddle must be turn with the conceit of his own powers, when he has learnt, that a Horse is such an animal, & Billy is better than a Horse, & such like...Damn them. I mean the cursed Barbauld Crew, those Blights and Blasts of all that is Human in man and child.’ (1976: 81-2)<sup>63</sup>

Lamb’s assertion that this factual knowledge is empty ‘nonsense’ demonstrates a belief that the imagination is a better medium for education. Though Lamb’s sentiments largely reflect those of Godwin, particularly in the rejection of mundane detail, he expresses himself more explicitly and more vehemently than his future publisher – going as far to reject Mrs. Barbauld, who Godwin had no issue with. The ‘old classics of the nursery’ which Lamb saw as having been relegated to the sidelines, were the same stories replicated from more traditional sources, the same ones which Godwin had recommended for children: however where Godwin had allowed for Mrs. Barbauld and factual knowledge, Lamb’s interests were more strongly orientated. In the same letter, he complained to Coleridge that the new writers for children ignored such works, which stimulated what he called:

‘...that beautiful Interest in wild tales which made the child a man, while all the time he suspected himself to be no bigger than a child. Science has succeeded to Poetry no less in the little walks of Children than with Men. –: Is there no possibility of averting this sore evil? Think what you would have been now, if instead of being fed with Tales and old wives’ fables in childhood, you had been crammed with Geography and Natural History?’ (1976: 82)

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<sup>63</sup> All of Lamb’s correspondence is taken from Marris 1974; Marris 1975; Marris 1978. The editor’s name is included only where clarity is needed (i.e. where Marris has included the letters of Godwin in reply), or for in-text citations.

For Lamb, the factions of science and poetry were drawn much more rigidly than for Godwin, who was no doubt also influenced by Wollstonecraft. The *Odyssey* was for Lamb, not just a 'wild tale' (which Perrault, and now the 'Barbauld crew' had derogatorily associated with childhood), but a trigger for the imagination that would shape the adults of the future. Though Godwin had also strongly advocated a similar approach, he stopped short of Lamb, who was rejecting didactic reading for children outright in favour of recreational literature. The adventures of Odysseus were not yet widely available in a format specifically aimed at children, and in attempting such an adaptation in light of the 'Tales and old wives' fables' which had shaped their own childhood, Lamb made some formative choices in the process of writing that remoulded the boundaries of the canonical form of the poem in the popular imagination: specifically, Lamb conceived the *Odyssey* itself in light of travel and adventure fiction.

Lamb's own juvenile passion for adventure-based fiction was not new in itself, and reflects an important part of the oeuvre read by children who had access to literature. Lamb reflects on the infectious enthusiasm for adventure, which was shared by his school-contemporaries, in his essay of 1813, *Recollections of Christ's Hospital*, he recalls an episode from his youth when 'some half-dozen of [his friends] set off from school, without map, card, or compass, on a serious expedition to find out Philip Quarll's Island' (1835: 79).<sup>64</sup> However, when he first came to write *The Adventures of Ulysses* in 1808, such tales had yet to be formally accepted by the taste-makers of children's publishing.<sup>65</sup> Richard and Maria Edgeworth wrote in their educational treatise, *Practical Education* (1798):

"There is a class of books which amuse the imagination of children without acting upon their feelings. We do not allude to fairy tales, for we apprehend that these are not now much read, but we mean voyages and travels; these interest young people universally. Robinson Crusoe, Gulliver, and the Three Ruffian Sailors, who were cast away upon the coast of Norway, are general favourites. No child ever read an account of a shipwreck, even a storm, without pleasure. A desert island is a delightful place, to be equalled only by the skating land of the rein-deer, by the valley of diamonds in the Arabian tales. Savages, especially if they be cannibals, are sure to be admired, and the more hair-breadth escapes the hero of the tale has survived, and

<sup>64</sup> *The Hermit, or the Unparallel'd Sufferings and Adventures of Mr. Philip Quarll*, was an evidently popular sea-adventure novel from 1727, which owed a great debt to *Robinson Crusoe*. See Watters 1998: 116.

<sup>65</sup> For further detail on late eighteenth and early nineteenth century reading, see Grenby 2011.

the more marvellous his adventures, the more sympathy he excites.'  
(1798: 336-7)

The Edgeworths' definitions read almost as a précis of Odysseus' adventures: a shipwreck, the 'savage' giant Polyphemus, the cannibal Laestrygonians, the hair-breadth escape from the Sirens, as well as Scylla and Charybdis, and the remote islands of Calypso and Circe. The cannibal motif, which was apparently so appealing to young readers, was particularly potent for eighteenth-century European readers as the exploration of the New World recounted through these travel stories narrowed the gap between fantasy and reality. As Avramescu 2011: 12 explores, even the hero of the paradigmatic work for children *Robinson Crusoe* was subject to a constant fear that others present might be cannibals, though the portrayals of native peoples in this light ultimately served to affirm the authority of the colonizers, and the story benefitted from such adrenaline. The Edgeworths were, like Godwin, concerned with the future child, however, they saw adventure fiction as damaging to the future prospects of the child, rather than fortifying, calling it: 'absolutely incompatible with the sober perseverance necessary to success in other liberal professions' – recommending it as only perhaps suitable for boys who are destined for maritime life, or the army, but not for the majority of the bourgeoisie. Generally, boys should be discouraged from reading such fiction, as it unwisely encouraged them to consider themselves to be favoured by fortune, and that by venturing boldly, they will achieve greatness by luck, rather than skill or persistence. Girls are warned off adventure stories entirely, as they are likely to be disappointed when they realise that such experiences will never be open to them. Such sentiments could not mask the fact that tales of far-off lands were greatly popular in the lead up to the nineteenth century, which saw a continued prevalence of stories in this mould. The memoirs of the Scottish geologist Hugh Miller (born 1802) include *Gulliver's Travels*, the voyages of Drake and Raleigh, and the *Iliad* and *Odyssey*<sup>66</sup> amongst his childhood reading, reflecting the continuing strong crossover in readerships between adults and children, and the inclusion of the *Odyssey* in memorable tales of this type.

In addition to having to defend their imaginative approach, there was also a need for Lamb and Godwin to reclaim stories of travel and adventure as edifying for children.

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<sup>66</sup> See Grenby 2011: 127, who cites these works, amongst others, as the juvenile reading habits of Miller (b. 1802).



Other contributing authors to the Juvenile Library took up this cause. In a work called *Stories of Old Daniel*, which was published in the same year as Lamb's *The Adventures of Ulysses*, Margaret Moore King (also known as Lady Mountcashell, a former protégée of Mary Wollstonecraft), argued explicitly that children should aspire to, and be prepared for travel:

'My great object in publishing these Tales, is to encourage in children a love of reading, which, by becoming habitual, may lead to profitable studies in their riper years: and as I have observed, that among the great number of books for young people, there are comparatively few which attempt to turn the thoughts of their readers to foreign countries, and thus induce them to profit by the many well-written books of travels we possess, I have rather been desirous to give my little stories this kind of novelty. I have endeavoured to afford my young readers (to borrow the words of a simple and elegant writer) "little foretastes of the great pleasure which awaits them in their elder years," when circumstances may actually lead them to foreign lands, or a desire of knowledge turn their attention to the perusal of what travellers have written. In short, my ardent wish is to promote as much as possible, that love of literature, which procures *the most independent of all employments, and the most durable of all pleasures.*' (1807: v)

The writer whose words she borrows was Lamb.<sup>67</sup> Travel was now a real prospect for these child readers, which directly related to their future lives: they ought to be worldly, and as yet, they were underprepared. Lamb's own words suggest a certain pragmatism in relation to his own work – an expectation perhaps, that his young readers will grow up to read a full translation of the Homeric poem, and the ground will have been laid for them to embrace travel in their daily lives. Further still, King's most emphatic argument supports the idea that literature of all kinds should be encouraged for its benefits and longevity, and that a 'love of literature' can be beneficial irrespective of content: or in other words, regardless of the approval of travel stories, they could only encourage children to move on to other (better) literature. For Lamb, the notion of travel narratives as a gateway to other literature – Homeric poetry, Fénelon, and classical literature more broadly – would be a useful addition to his defence of his work.

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<sup>67</sup> In his preface to *Tales from Shakespeare*, where he discusses the awaited pleasure of being able to read Shakespeare's original works: 'the rich treasures from which these small and valueless coins are extracted.' (1807: v)

Foreign voyages already played a key role in Lamb's life, both personally and pragmatically. As well as his life-long employment at East India House, several of Lamb's old friends took posts abroad.<sup>68</sup> One of his correspondents and closest friends was Thomas Manning, who, prior to the publication of *The Adventures of Ulysses*, had travelled widely to Paris and Canton (being affectionately nicknamed 'Missionary' by Lamb (Marrs 1976: 271)). He would go on to Calcutta in 1810, and he was the first Englishman to enter the city of Lhasa in Tibet (Marrs 1976: 54, 226; 1978: 89), receiving several audiences with the young Dalai Lama, although he was forced to depart alone by the Peking government four months later. In a letter to Manning from 1806, Lamb replies enthusiastically to Manning's latest news:

'China – Canton – bless us –how it strains the imagination and makes it ache!' (1976: 244)

The imagination, which was so crucial to Godwin and Lamb's understanding of children's literature, was also stimulated by Manning's real-life stories. With this tangible experience of broadening British horizons, it is not surprising that Lamb was drawn to the *Odyssey*: his daily routine meant he was consistently exposed to stories of exotic voyages, and one of his closest friends was breaking new ground by entering exotic places with more than a degree of religious mysticism about them. The convergence of the rise of Hellenism and an expanding international political and cultural outlook in the nineteenth century meant that the *Odyssey* would appear to be a natural fit for both the new bourgeois readership and those like Lamb and Godwin, who wanted to share tales of adventure with a new generation. Travel fiction relating to the real world roused the imagination and fantasy associated with fairy tales – the more fantastic the adventure, the more the imagination would be stirred – which is exactly what the Edgeworths feared. Odysseus' far-flung nautical travels were not so far removed from the stories Lamb was being fed by Manning, or the 'wild tales' of his youth: indeed, to Lamb, they spoke a very similar language – but the same passages would cause consternation between writer and publisher.

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<sup>68</sup> Samuel Le Grice (Brother of Lamb's close childhood friend Charles Valentine Le Grice, and schoolmate of Lamb) died in Jamaica in 1802 as a result of yellow fever (Marrs 1976: 81).

- ii. 'The Giant's vomit': *The Adventures of Ulysses*, the *Odyssey* and placating demographics.

The most famous cannibal of the *Odyssey*, as iterated in Lamb's manuscript for *The Adventures of Ulysses*, provoked a series of disagreements between Lamb and Godwin. These disputes were primarily based on the conflict between the educational and recreational balance of the *Odyssey* when adapted for children, but also influenced by the specific demands of the demographics of the market. The way in which the author and publisher appeared to placate different genders would shape the characterisation of the protagonists of the poem. Two scenes were the central cause of tension – first, the consumption of Ulysses' men by Polyphemus, which Lamb had outlined as follows:

'He replied nothing, but griping two of the nearest of them, as if they had been no more than children, he dashed their brains out against the earth, and (shocking to relate) tore in pieces their limbs, and devoured them, yet warm and trembling, making a lion's meal of them, lapping the blood: for the Cyclops are *man-eaters*, and esteem human flesh to be a delicacy far above goat's or kid's; though by reason of their abhorred customs, few men approach their coast, except some stragglers, or now and then, a shipwrecked mariner.' (1808: 10–11)

Lamb revels in this episode: not only does he compare the eaten men to children, rather than puppies as in the *Odyssey* ('ὡς τε σκύλακας' *Od.* 9.289), thus teasing the young audience by increasing their own personal fear, but he also outlines cannibalistic episode specifically in terms of existing travel fiction – most notably referring to the 'shipwrecked mariner' who encounters the natives, which is designed to bring *Robinson Crusoe* to mind. Both protagonists are renowned for their resourcefulness, situated in a remote and exotic location after long voyages and shipwreck (cf. Odysseus on Calypso's island in *Od.* 5, or Odysseus washed ashore in Phaeacia in *Od.* 6), and both works have been discussed in terms of colonialism: the 'civilising' mission of Robinson's behaviour towards Man Friday, compared with the transgressions in Odysseus' interactions with the 'uncultured' Polyphemus in *Od.* 9, or the potential for settlement on the island adjacent to that of the Cyclopes, which Dougherty 2001: 128–9 notes, embodies the

novel possibilities of ancient Greek colonization.<sup>69</sup> More broadly, the *Odyssey* exploits familiar mythic characters and plots, and 'helps a Greek audience accommodate the challenges of a new world of exploration and settlement' (2001: 128): a guidance that Lamb would adopt for young readers of the nineteenth century. However, there is no direct genealogy of influence between the *Odyssey* and *Robinson Crusoe*, as Defoe is well-known to have been a vocal critic of classical epic.<sup>70</sup> For Lamb though, Defoe invokes a similar picture:

'When I was come down the Hill to the Shore, as I said above, being the S.W. Point of the Island, I was perfectly confounded and amaz'd; nor is it possible for me to express the Horror of my Mind at seeing the Shore spread with Skulls, Hands, Feet, and other Bones of humane Bodies; and particularly, I observ'd a Place where there had been a Fire made, and a Circle dug in the Earth, like a Cockpit, where I suppose the Savage Wretches had sat down to their inhumane Feastings upon the Bodies of their Fellow-Creatures... Night and Day, I could think of nothing but how I might destroy some of these Monsters in their cruel, bloody Entertainment.'  
(1994: 119-20; 22)

There are no signs on the shore to warn Ulysses, who has chosen to sail to the Cyclops' island (unlike Crusoe), but the brutal actions of Polyphemus against the men, and the remains left by Defoe's cannibals, are both focused on bodily parts (brains, limbs, flesh, skulls, hands, feet, bones). Combined with the mutually exchangeable images of the savage 'monsters' (Defoe) and 'abhorred customs' (Lamb) illustrates the synchronicity of the two works in this instance. Lamb was deliberately sharing his love of this kind of fiction, and he continued to use this vivacious language as the Cyclops is blinded:

'Ulysses watched his time, while the monster lay insensible, and heartening up his men, they placed the sharp end of the stake in the fire till it was heated red-hot, and some god gave them a courage beyond that which they were used to have, and the four men with

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<sup>69</sup> For more on the colonial significance of 'goat island' see also Austin and Vidal-Naquet 1977: 39, 202; Hall 1989: 47-50; 2008: 75-80, 89-100.

<sup>70</sup> In a vein comparable with the Moderns of France: he found classical epic to be brutal, immoral, and militarized in nature, and favoured Virgil over Homer, due to the latter's unrealism and fantastic qualities (Watt 2001: 240). Most scholars agree that his central source of inspiration was the supposedly real-life story of Alexander Selkirk, a Scottish sailor who was supposedly marooned on a desert island. (See contemporary accounts by Cooke, Woodes Rogers, and Steele in Shinagel 1994: 230-238). Although he was familiar enough with the Homeric poems in order to criticise classical epic, we cannot convincingly cite the *Odyssey* as a direct influence on Defoe.

difficulty bored the sharp end of the huge stake, which they had heated red-hot, right into the eye of the drunken cannibal, and Ulysses helped them to thrust it in with all his might, still further and further, with effort, as men bore with an augre, till the scalded blood gushed out, and the eye-ball smoaked, and the strings of the eye cracked, as the burning rafter broke in it, and the eye hissed, as hot iron hisses when it is plunged into water.’ (1808: 15)

The sensual stimulation of Lamb’s language is designed to provoke the imagination – the sensations of temperature, the force with which the men thrust the stake into the eye, the spectacle of the blood, the smells of the flesh being cauterized and the sounds of the eye cracking and hissing. Moreover, Lamb followed his model closely, as the imagery of the hot, bleeding eye is all in the Homeric poem – including the snapping eye strings and the simile of the eye hissing like rapidly cooling iron in water (*Od.* 9.389–95): yet despite his belief in the benefits of the imaginative faculties for children, and his esteem for both classical literature and travel fiction, these passages made the bookseller Godwin nervous. *Robinson Crusoe* had drawn much admiration for its Christian allegory, which had softened its cannibalistic imagery, but Lamb’s Odyssean passage was overstepping the bounds of propriety.

In response to a draft of the text that Lamb had sent to him, on 10<sup>th</sup> March 1808, Godwin sent him the following reply:

‘I address you with all humility, because I know you to be *tenax propositi*. Hear me I intreat you with patience. It is strange with what different feelings an author & a bookseller looks at the sam(e) manuscript. I know this by experience: I was an author – I am a bookseller. The author thinks what will conduce to his honour: the bookseller what will cause his commodities to sell. You or some other wise man I have heard say, It is children that read children’s books (when they are read); but it is parents that choose them. The critical thought of the tradesman puts itself therefore into the place of the parent, & enquires what will please the parent, & what the parent will condemn. We live in squeamish days. Amidst the beauties of your manuscript, of which no man can think more highly than I do, what will the squeamish say to such expressions as these? “devoured their limbs, yet warm & trembling, lapping the blood.” p.10, or to the giant’s vomit, p.14, or to the minute & shocking description of the extinguishing of the giant’s eye, in the page following. You I dare say have formed no plan of excluding the female sex from among your readers, & I, as a bookseller, must consider that, if you have, you exclude one half of the human species.

Nothing is more easy than to modify these things, if you please; & nothing I think, is more indispensable.' (1975: 278)

Godwin's attempt to pre-empt the criticism of the market was not driven by literary motives – after all, he appeared to admire Lamb's work, even if using his praise to mitigate his criticism ('Amidst the beauties of your manuscript, of which no man can think more highly than I do...'). Rather, Godwin's editorial opinion depended on a more popular understanding of what was appropriate in the *Odyssey* for children to read. As McGillis 1996: 17–8 notes in summarizing the seminal theoretical work of children's literature, Rose's *The Case of Peter Pan, or the Impossibility of Children's Fiction* (1984), children's literature is not based around children, but rather based around:

'[Adults'] conception of what children ought to be and ought to learn...Adults want children to read certain books for social reasons. Consequently, children's books and the criticism of children's books are a form of social power.'

As part of the adult literary canon, the *Odyssey* undoubtedly benefitted Lamb and Godwin in that it is a work that children could aspire to read in full as adults. However, whilst the adult readership of the *Odyssey* would have one set of expectations concerning the treatment of the *Odyssey*, parents as a distinct group, would have another. Whilst he alleges to have no objections himself to such squeamish scenes, we can see Godwin, who was no stranger to criticism for his inflammatory political writings, carefully treading the boundaries of propriety for the sake of satisfying his adult readers (and in particular, his customers – parents) when he asks Lamb to reconsider imagery which more often than not, is present in the Homeric poem. Godwin euphemistically acknowledged Lamb's stubbornness on the subject of edits via Horace's *Odes* III.3.1 ('I know you to be tenacious in your aim') as he tried to quell the fervour of these passages. The editor is anxious about not what children will think, or even literary criticism (such as the Quarrel), but what the parents as consumers will think ('it is parents that choose them'). He is acutely aware of the strains of appealing simultaneously to different audiences of this still novel market that, according to some, already appeared to be outgrowing itself. Moreover, he was pressured by the success of 'Barbauld crew' who had garnered such success with their heavily moral and didactic tales. The *Odyssey*, unlike ever before, needed a competitive commercial edge.

It was not only the tension between the *Odyssey* and didactic children's writing, or the moral squeamishness over particular scenes that was potentially commercially damaging. The consternation which Godwin expressed to Lamb in light of the specific elements of the Homeric poem – the devouring of the limbs, the Giant's vomit, the extinguishing of the eye – was, as their correspondence indicates – highly gendered. Godwin considered such imagery divisive, and personally worrying ('You I dare say have formed no plan of excluding the female sex...I, as a bookseller, must consider that, if you have, you exclude one half of the human species...'). As Simons 2010: 144 notes, 'By the end of the eighteenth century...there was increased stratification of texts along gender lines...by the mid to late nineteenth century, the separate fictional worlds of boys and girls were being demarcated with great clarity, each with its own internal laws and its own territory, from which the other sex was outlawed'. The *Odyssey* would be marketed for generations to come as suitable reading matter for both sexes (by the end of the century, the *Odyssey* appeared to be genteel enough that Samuel Butler could argue in *The Authoress of the Odyssey* that the poem was composed by a woman),<sup>71</sup> but this stratification of gender roles would reflect a subdividing instinct which underpins children's literature from its earliest formations. Although Godwin did not publish for specifically gendered audiences, the fear of 'excluding the female sex', threatened to hit their commercial interests disproportionately. Women played an essential role in education in the eighteenth century, as noted by Hilton and Shefrin (2009: 9), with many children of the upper and middle classes being taught in a domestic or small-scale 'dame school' where one woman might be responsible for the entirety of a child's primary education. Along with mothers, such women would have been a target market: Godwin may have felt that special caution was needed for commercial reasons as much as for protecting any faint-hearted readers.

Lamb's response to this letter begins the process of unveiling how his passion for adventure translated via his own engagement with the *Odyssey*. In it, he reveals a frustration with the singling out of the *Odyssey* for such criticism:

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<sup>71</sup> See Butler 1897: 125–27 where he discusses the 'white-washing' of Penelope by the author of the *Odyssey* as part of an attempt to prove that the poet was female. Although as Whitmarsh 2002: 84–5 argues, such arguments are part of a broader ploy by Butler to locate a voice outside the classical academy.

‘The Giant’s vomit was perfectly nauseous, and I am glad that you pointed it out. I have removed the objection. – To the other passages I can find no other objection but what you may bring to numberless passages besides, such as Scylla snatching up the six men &c – that is to say, they are lively images of *shocking* things. If you want a book which is not occasionally to *shock*, you should not have thought of a Tale which was so full of Anthropophagi & monsters. I cannot alter those things without enervating the Book, I will not alter them if the penalty should be that you & all the London Booksellers should refuse it. But speaking as author to author, I must say that I think the terrible in those two passages seems to me so much to preponderate over the nauseous, as to make them rather fine than disgusting. Who is to read them I don’t [sic] know – who is it who reads Tales of Terror & Mysteries of Udolpho?<sup>72</sup> such things sell. – I only say that I will not consent to alter such passages which I know to be some of the best in the Book.’ [10 March (?)] (1808) (1975: 279)

Worrisome anthropophagi had also featured in *Robinson Crusoe*, which was a staple of children’s literature and adult reading alike, but this was not subject to the same objections as the *Odyssey*: the dismay expressed by Godwin seemed to Lamb to be somewhat excessive. The difference in standards between the *Odyssey* and other forms of literature highlights the augmented anxiety over the use of literature originating from classical antiquity – a conflict illustrated between Godwin’s desire for Lamb’s work to live up to its full didactic potential, and Lamb’s concern with the reader’s experience, which speaks to the present more than the past. Lamb invokes modern sensationalist Gothic stories as a comparison: the episodes of the *Odyssey* in this Gothic light are not only an essential part of the narrative, according to Lamb, but ‘fine’. The blood of the devoured men, or the violence of the blinding of the Cyclops’ eye may be ‘what the parent will condemn’ but Lamb is much more motivated by the desires of his imagined readers, which are located in the exotic creatures which are reflected in their contemporary reading. Lamb’s threat of withholding the manuscript may be an exaggeration, but it shows a literary conviction in the fantastic elements of the Homeric poem, and their fundamental role within it. Almost all of the complaints raised by Godwin – Scylla, and monsters, cannot be removed from the plot together without removing a significant proportion of the events constituting Ulysses’ return, as Lamb

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<sup>72</sup> *Tales of Terror* was a compilation of horror stories by Walter Scott, Matthew Lewis (author of early Gothic phenomenon *The Monk*) and others, whilst the *Mysteries of Udolpho* by Ann Radcliffe was another hugely successful early Gothic novel. Lamb’s point here is that some of the most successful contemporary novels are dark and violent.



points out. In the process, Lamb turns Godwin's remaining objections on their head by suggesting that it is in fact these violent and monstrous aspects which are the most commercially viable: 'such things sell'. Most significantly, Lamb goes further: by claiming the poem is 'so full of Anthropophagi and monsters', when in reality these scenes are a minority in the poem as a whole, we have a specific conflation of the *Odyssey* as a whole with these episodes, and disproportionate prominence given to them. Perrault had associated the poem with fantastic tales as a means of undermining the authority of the *Odyssey*, but Lamb's positive association not just with travel, but fantastic adventure marks a new stage in the reception of the poem.

This leaves one question: why did Lamb capitulate to Godwin on the detail of the vomit, being the only such concession made? Although a small detail, it carries significant implications for the legacy of the *Odyssey* in children's writing. Lamb's depiction of the vomiting of the Cyclops matches Homer's *Od.* 9.347 (ὁ δ' ἐρεύγετο οἶνοβαρείων). However, given Lamb's own admission that he was not working directly from the Greek, it is more likely to derive<sup>73</sup> from the translation of the *Odyssey* by Chapman, which describes how:

'...from his throte brake out  
My wine, with man's flesh gobbets, like a spout' (9.511–12; 2000: 162)

Perhaps, despite its origins in the ancient text, the vomit still seems gratuitous, distracting from the narrative or even repulsive at a visceral, biological level. The fact that it *could* be disposed of without fundamentally 'enervating the Book' is crucial. Conveniently for Lamb, it acted as a bargaining chip, which indicated that he was willing to be cooperative for concessions made by Godwin in other areas. It implies that Godwin also valued narrative developments more than smaller details or matters of style when under pressure. It is the vomit, rather than the cannibalism or blinding of the Cyclops, or Scylla, that was removed. Despite his shorter-lived classical education, it is Lamb, rather than Godwin, who is arguing for the preservation of the details in some of the most famous episodes of the Homeric poem: the motivation may be sensationalism, but the defence appeals to the canonical status of the *Odyssey*.

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<sup>73</sup> As noted by James 2009: 113.

Lamb was not completely impervious to the criticism of such imagery and the need to tone it down. He addressed head-on the concern that travel fiction taught the reliance on chance, associated with the lower-class chapbooks: he recounted the loss of the last of Ulysses' companions (cf. *Od.* 12:415–20), the dead sailors embodying the fears of the didactically-minded critics of children's literature that fervent young boys would come to unpleasant ends through misplaced bravery:

'Of all those faithful partakers of his toil, who with him left Asia, laden with the spoils of Troy, now not one remains, but all a prey to the remorseless waves, and food for some great fish: their gallant navy reduced to one ship, and that finally swallowed up and lost. Where now are all their anxious thoughts of home? That perseverance with which they went through the severest sufferings and the hardest labours to which poor sea-farers were ever exposed, that their toils at last might be crowned with the sight of their native shires and wives at Ithaca!' (1808: 78–9)

Lamb pointedly lingers on the fates of the men – more so than the self-occupied Odysseus in the Homeric poem. Lamb encourages sympathy, if not admiration of the companions' failed attempts to return home: rather than being blamed for their own folly (such as in the opening of Aeolus' bag of winds (*Od.* 10.31–55), or the roasting of the sacred cattle in *Od.* 12.359–98), they receive sympathy/are treated sympathetically because they have been through the same experiences as Ulysses. They are even praised for their 'perseverance' – the same quality which the Edgeworths accused similar stories of lacking. The sympathy that Lamb encourages is designed precisely to acknowledge the qualities that conservative critics of children's literature promoted. Lamb, by recognising perseverance not only in Ulysses, but his unsuccessful companions, and by recounting the *Odyssey*, suggests that adventure stories can teach tenacity too.

Lamb could also assuage the futility of the companions' deaths through the image of the 'gallant navy' who wished to be 'crowned' with the sight of home, invoking the nobility of their service to Ulysses. Such imagery became increasingly important in the nineteenth-century, and this home was Britain, the heart of the Empire: adventure stories of the period normally result in a return to the place where the protagonists started, to a place of security and comfort. The companions' deaths become a more noble loss as a result. In the *Odyssey*, the picture of homecoming is more problematic,

and the loss of all the army a matter for strident defence of Odysseus on the part of the poet (*Od.* 1.1–10); moreover, on his arrival home, there is very little apparent security, other than a few loyal individuals (Telemachus, Eumaeus, Eurycleia and Philoetius) to ensure his safe reestablishment in the house. Finally, Odysseus will have to go on a second voyage, as prophesised by Tiresias (*Od.* 11.119–37). Lamb, however, implicitly hints to children in the extract above that Ithaca is a safe and final destination, which is the ultimate aspiration after travel: at the end of the story there is no open-endedness about the future of Ithaca ('So from that time land had rest from the suitors' (1808: 202)). Home is associated with family, safety and domesticity, as a reworking of a Homeric simile upon Odysseus' arrival off the coast of Phaeacia demonstrates. In Book 5 of the *Odyssey*, the simile is as follows:

'And as welcome as the show of life again in a father  
is to his children, when he has lain sick, suffering strong pains,  
and wasting long away, and the hateful death has brushed him,  
but then, and it is welcome, the gods set him free of his sickness,  
so welcome appeared land and forest now to Odysseus.'  
(*Od.* 5.394–398)

For Lamb, simplifying this for young readers results in simpler tones, which are more nationalistic as a result:

'And such joy he conceived in his heart, as good sons have, that esteem  
their father's life dear, when long sickness has held him down to his  
bed, and wasted his body, and they see at length health returns to the  
old man, with restored strength and spirits, in reward of their many  
prayers to the gods for his safety: so precious was the prospect of  
home-return to Ulysses, that he might restore health to his country  
(his better parent), that had long languished as full of distempers in  
his absence.' (1808: 93)<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>74</sup> Lamb's text comes via Chapman, as explored in the following sections. Chapman reiterated the simile:

'The sight is precious; so, since here should end  
Ulysses' toiles, which therein should extend  
Health to his countrie, held to him his Sire  
And on which long for him Disease did tire.' (5.520–3, Nicoll 2000:100)

Though Chapman had used the same image, Lamb's is the more explicit version of the parent analogy.

The country as 'the better parent' is given an additional layer of relevance to the intended young audience, who were increasingly invited to consider their homeland in a similar light through their recreational reading: the homeland is not just domestic, and secure, but quite literally a primary caregiver. The return to this domestic parent, as depicted by Lamb, rather than giving children a misguided hope of success, is so difficult to achieve in the *Odyssey*, that it is much more difficult for accusations of chance or luck to be cast at the famously *polytropos* and *polytlas* protagonist, whose ingenuity can be emphasised. The very fantastic nature of the difficulties in Odysseus' voyage, through their contrast with the stability of home, allow a robust defence against some of the charges made by the Edgeworths.

Lamb also acknowledged the proprieties of catering for a female market – though it is impossible to say whether this was a direct result of Godwin's comments, due to the lack of a pre-publication manuscript. We can locate two specific instances that seem to have been moulded to this purpose which took the form of insertions into the narrative by the narrator. When Ulysses arrives in Phaeacia and recounts his travels to the court, Nausicaa takes pleasure in his tales: 'The princess Nausicaa gave great delight (as ladies are commonly taken with these kinds of travellers' stories)' (1808: 305). Whether this insertion was by Lamb, or Godwin, at this point in the nineteenth-century, tales of travel are not solely aimed at boys, and an encompassing statement such as this serves to reassure the adult purchaser of the propriety of the story for children of both sexes, not least through the approval of a pure princess figure such as Nausicaa. Further original insertions are made in a similarly placating manner. Ulysses' marital fidelity is particularly stressed: 'A memorable example of married love, and a worthy instance how dear to every good man his country is, was exhibited by Ulysses... his heart was on the seas making voyages to Ithaca' (1808: 80). Such lines are read most effectively if we consider a hypothetical female reader who Lamb imagines might be disquieted by the seductions of Calypso or Circe (the latter exclaiming: 'O Ithacan, a goddess woos thee to her bed' (1808: 35)) being reassured by such an explicit praise of Ulysses' concern for fidelity. However, the most dramatic alteration in this light is the absence of the test of Penelope on Ulysses' return: her fidelity is never in doubt, and Penelope does not test Ulysses regarding their marriage bed. Rather, Telemachus interjects to reassure his mother that the man before her is, indeed, Ulysses (1808: 200–

1).<sup>75</sup> This subtle adjustment has much wider consequences for the narrative of the *Odyssey*. The marriage bed test scene in the *Odyssey* is often read by Homeric scholars (Austin 1975: 237; Katz 2014: 159–60) to emphasise the suitability of Penelope for Odysseus as a wife, in how their like-mindedness (*homophrosyne*) in their use of tricks is symptomatic of their balanced relationship: not only in their striving to protect the other's interests, but in the complementary nature of their actions, thoughts, and even their dreams (Foley 1978: 69, 73). By omitting the full part of such a reunion, Lamb may have been reassuring a female readership by making Penelope a more obedient and simpler figure, but in reality it scales down her agency in the narrative even more than in the original. In the *Odyssey*, *homophrosyne*, as Van Nortwick 2008: 114 argues, is not just the reunion of man and wife, but of trickster and weaver: by omitting scenes such as Penelope's test, the wiliness with which she acts, which gives her 'centrifugal independence' (2008: 114), is pared down, rendering Lamb's Penelope more passive than the most powerless elements of the Penelope of the *Odyssey*.

Indeed, the downscaling of the roles of both Penelope and Telemachus in Lamb's adaptation is symptomatic of a broader picture which positions Ulysses centre-stage consistently and throughout. When taking up the story of Ulysses' stay on Calypso's island, he chronologically integrates the adventures as follows, emphasising Ulysses' solitude after losing his companions:

'Henceforth the adventures of the single Ulysses must be pursued... Ulysses is now in the isle Ogygia; called the Delightful Island. The poor shipwrecked chief, the slave of all the elements, is once again raised by the caprice of fortune into a shadow of prosperity.' (1808: 79)

Odysseus is of course, made 'single' in the *Odyssey* through the course of his voyage, but this singularity – both literally and figuratively, in his role as sole bearer of all these misfortunes, and sole plaything of fate – is empowered by his position as protagonist. The companions who had shared Ulysses' 'perseverance' are drawn as unfortunate versions of their general, with the result that the issues of responsibility for their loss is

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<sup>75</sup> 'Sometimes she was clear that it was her husband that she saw, and sometimes the alteration which twenty years had made in his person (yet that was not much) perplexed her that she knew not what to think, and for joy she could not believe; and, above all, that sudden change from a beggar to king troubled her, and wrought uneasy scruples in her mind. But Telemachus, seeing her strangeness, blamed her, and called her an ungentle and tyrannous mother! And said that she shewed a too great curiousness of modesty, to abstain from embracing his father, and to have doubts of his person, when to all present it was evident that he was the very real and true Ulysses. Then she mistrusted no longer...' (1808: 200–1)

sidestepped, despite Ulysses' accountability as their leader. Lamb is constructing Ulysses in Romantic terms: emphasizing his 'everyman' qualities to make him more remarkable, and morally creditable.

The Romantic Hellenism of the early nineteenth-century, led by some of Lamb's friends and contemporaries, heralded a shift in attitude towards the ancient Greek world. Romantic Hellenism, most notable in the writings of Keats, Shelley and Byron, who all died young in the early part of the decade (1821, 1822, and 1824 respectively) played a major role in stirring enthusiasm for the ancient Greek world, and a more inclusive approach which brought a wider range of Greek texts, images and motifs into public consciousness. The resonance of the *Odyssey* with contemporary poets outstripped that of other Homeric poems, as Webb 1982: 96 notes: 'with the advent of the Romantic period, the *Iliad* was still admired but it was the *Odyssey* which did more to stimulate the poetic imagination'. Several iconic Romantic poems utilised the idea of a traveller in exotic destinations (notably, Shelley's *Ozymandias* and Coleridge's *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* and *Kubla Khan*), but Lamb's *The Adventures of Ulysses* brought Romantic Hellenism most explicitly to bear on the *Odyssey*.

The Romantic admiration of not simply adventure, but specifically individual misadventure, is examined in detail in Carl Thompson's 2007 work, *The Suffering Traveller and the Romantic Imagination*. Thompson argues that misadventure is one way of measuring 'authentic' experience (2007: 23-6), and leads to a more fully-realised selfhood. He cites the works and correspondence of Keats, Shelley, and Hazlitt, illustrating how these Romantic figures idealized and associated themselves with misadventurers, precisely because, as Thompson describes: 'to play the part of a misadventurer was to play the part of someone who had been through a hugely revelatory, possibly even life-changing, test of character'. The self-identification (both of Lamb and the encouraged self-association in his intended audience) with the misfortunes of a single 'slave of all the elements', who is 'raised by the caprice of fortune' even to negative ends, implies a special status attributed to Ulysses' endurance. This Romantic outlook is made explicit in Lamb, when Ulysses meets the Phaeacians: to counter the restructured chronological narrative, Lamb inserts an episode to smooth over the disruption, informing the reader that Ulysses recounted his adventures to the court:

‘...if they had before entertained a high respect for their guest, now felt their veneration increased tenfold, when they learned from his own mouth what perils, what sufferance, what endurance of evils beyond man’s strength to support, this much-sustaining, almost heavenly man, by this greatness of his mind, and by his invincible courage, had struggled through.’ (1808: 125–6)

The external characterisation featured in this passage, completely invented by Lamb, not only positions Ulysses as an ‘almost heavenly’ man who is beyond moral reproach because of his ingenuity and courage, but it defines Ulysses by his adventures. His character is elevated by virtue of his successful negotiation of his obstacles, raising him to his best potential: Lamb’s Ulysses is the very embodiment of the Romantic misadventurer, which attributes to him a moral, as well as existential authority (Thompson 2007: 274) – an essential attribute, given the very specific nature of Lamb’s intended readership.

This moral authority also shapes Lamb’s narrative: the same third-person narrative interjection is used to approach one of the most morally problematic passages from the *Odyssey* – the slaughter of the suitors. Odysseus’ revelatory speech from *Od.* 22.35–41 where he declares himself and his rationale for the slaughter is cut, and instead there is a shortened account that highlights Ulysses’ ill treatment by the suitors:

‘Then Ulysses revealed himself to all in that presence, and that he was the man whom they held to be dead at Troy, whose palace they had usurped, whose wife in his life-time they had sought in impious marriage, and that for this reason destruction was come upon them.’ (1808: 196)

Lamb relies partly on the impartial authority of the third-person narrator, unlike the Homeric narrator who allows Odysseus to vocalize his own reasons, but also on the Romantic moral authority of the protagonist. Rather than putting the moral lesson in the subjective mouth of the protagonist, the assumed neutrality of the third person narrator is supposed to legitimize the outcome. After a brief outline of the suitors’ death – one that only refers to them collectively, rather than as named individuals for the duration of this passage– the story ends after the death of the suitors. Book 24 of the *Odyssey*, where the cycle of vengeance is only resolved by Athena’s intervention, is completely omitted:

‘So from that time the land had rest from the suitors. And the happy Ithacans with songs and solemn sacrifices of praise to the gods celebrated the return of Ulysses: for he that had been so long absent was returned to wreak the evil upon the heads of the doers; in the place where they had done evil, there wreaked he his vengeance upon them.’ (1808: 202–3)

There is no sense of the open-endedness of the Homeric poem, which has predicted a second voyage for Odysseus; neither is there the psychological jarring of the intervention of Athena as a means of resolving the violence (*Od.* 24.529–49). Instead, the closure of Lamb’s narrative sees Ulysses reach the fully realised selfhood of the misadventurer, his character established as an enforcer of justice and a protector; a figure who is vindicated by his experiences, which is only made justifiable by a Romantic understanding of his adventures. The Romantic focus on the individual also depended on an identification between the reader and the protagonist – the ‘sympathy’ that the Edgeworths had been wary of encouraging, for fear that boys could be easily manipulated by malicious people: this specifically gendered identification would be increasingly drawn upon in the later part of the nineteenth century.

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Lamb’s modern children’s story provoked difficult questions about how it ought to be framed in relation to the *Odyssey*: this was the second area of serious contention between author and publisher. For Godwin, the reasons why he might publish a tale based upon the *Odyssey* were as important as the story itself, and providing a young readership with a historical context for *The Adventures of Ulysses* would prove to be a particularly strident topic of disagreement. Godwin felt it absolutely necessary to include an introduction to the figure of Homer in the Preface:

‘It is not everyone that knows Homer, & those that have heard of him, do not always call him to mind on the spur of the occasion in his most alluring form. The Preface ought I think to tell what Homer was – the Father of poetry, the eldest of historians, the collector & recorder of all that was then known, the parent of continuous narration, of imagery, of dramatic character, of dramatic dialogue, of a whole having beginning, middle and end. What book can be better adapted to be put into the hands of children, or of the majority of adults, than a simple unfolding of the tale of the simplest, yet the most famous & venerable



of poets, especially when that tale contains the oldest adventures, & the oldest, beautiful manners, now known in the world?'  
Your Preface is too naked & wants some such introduction given the style which no one professes so completely as you. All that you have said is well, & would form an admirable sequel to such an introduction.' (1808) (Marrs, 1975: 282–3)

Godwin outlines value of the poet in Aristotelian terms, borrowing heavily from the *Poetics*, where the poet is lauded for his status as 'the supreme poet of serious subjects' (1448b34–7),<sup>76</sup> and ability to alternate between narrative and dramatic dialogue (1448a20–23),<sup>77</sup> and roundness of character (1454b9–14).<sup>78</sup> Further still, there is praise for his 'excellence of thought and diction' (1459b16) and the illustration by the poet of the 'right way to purvey falsehoods' (1460a19–20) (cf. Godwin's 'beautiful manners') and also, the promotion by Aristotle of unity and structure: 'By "whole" I mean possessing a beginning, middle and end' (1450b25–6). Questions can be raised concerning Godwin's use of Aristotle. As Halliwell 1987: 22–3 notes, the Romantic circle tended to overemphasise the 'unaristotelean' importance attached to the individual facility of the Romantic poet for imagination and emotion: instead, they tended to adapt Aristotle to their own work, using the notion of the universality of poetry as illustrated in *Poetics* 1451b6–8 to inflate its status (Halliwell 1987: 23–4). It is this perceived universality which Godwin draws upon when he regards the *Odyssey* to be one of the best books for readers of all ages: for him, it represents the Romantic spirit more effectively than any other piece of Greek literature, a view shared by Lamb as we have seen in his own work.

Despite this enthusiasm, the expression of these ideas was not substantial enough for Godwin the educator. In another letter, Godwin implies that men of their circumstance take for granted not only the knowledge of Homer, but also the ability of correct Homeric interpretation (which given Godwin's use of Aristotle, is also located in antiquity), whereas many others know Homer only by name, as if his works were no longer extant: 'Half our customers know not Homer, or know him only as you and I

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<sup>76</sup> cf. *Poetics* 1448b34–7: 'the supreme poet of serious subjects (for he was unique both in the quality and in the *dramatic* nature of his poetry)'. All translations of *Poetics* are by Halliwell 1987.

<sup>77</sup> Mimesis is achieved by 'alternation between narrative and dramatic dialogue (as in Homeric poetry)', *Poetics*, 1448a20–23.

<sup>78</sup> '...the poet, while portraying men who are irascible or lazy or who have other such faults, ought to give them, despite such traits, goodness of characters. An example of this is Homer's presentation of Achilles as good, despite his harshness.' *Poetics* 1454b9–14.

know the lost authors of antiquity' (1808, Marrs 1976: 278). Not only would a preface with a biographical and historical slant make Homer more accessible for the expanding middle classes, but it might also help Godwin and Lamb to explain why such a publication might be beneficial to children (and indeed, adults). Even those like Godwin and Lamb, who 'know' the poems through their formal education, could benefit from translations. Godwin was also concerned that the Homeric poems be read in their 'most alluring form' – a pursuit which appears to be presently hindered: for the readers that have heard of Homer, there is still a lingering influence of the Quarrel which invites an unfavourable impression of the morals of the ancient world. The solution to this, argues Godwin, is to emphasise the perceived foundational role of Homer in the literary canon and check the contemporary anxiety regarding 'the oldest adventures' with emphasis on the 'oldest, beautiful manners' – the latter in particular, a topic that was of contemporary preoccupation, as the next section outlines. By giving his readers a historical and literary context for the Homeric poems, Godwin hopes that some small factual context will capture the minds of readers who have only tangentially encountered Homeric poetry, by liberating them from moral anxieties with the result that they can appreciate the poem in its 'true' form.

Lamb, however, was consciously sacrificing the established tenet of explicit didacticism in children's literature. He rebutted Godwin as follows:

'I have read your letter and am fully of the opinion that such a drawling biography as you have chalk'd out is not my forte to write. I totally disagree with you; and prefer my own preface (as I am always likely to do) to any preface a man tells me I am qualified to write. You must take that, or none. I am sick absolutely of that spirit of objection which you constantly shew, as if it were only to teaze one, or to warn one against having any more dealings with you in the way of trade. My preface is just such a one as I approve & there is enough of it, but I had quite as lieve have *no preface* if you prefer it. I shall remember Ulysses as long as I live to write.' (1808) (1975: 283)

Lamb had won out over Godwin by asserting his creative independence and issuing the threat of no preface at all: the suggestion that his work could operate without a preface and still be a suitable story for children establishes Lamb as the first author to adapt the *Odyssey* for children with primarily recreational motives. By not offering a historical preface on Homer, he is promoting what he feels will best appeal to children: an

exciting, fast-paced narrative that will simultaneously allow them to share the common cultural currency of Homer in an accessible fashion.

With or without the preface, Lamb's work was going to be adventure-orientated: his eventual inclusion of a preface is revealing as a result, as it demonstrates Lamb's own defence of his approach to the *Odyssey*, which did not take the contextual approach advocated by Godwin. The final published preface is startling for its position on the Homeric poem, and as a result is worth exploring in full:

'This work is designed as a supplement to the Adventures of Telemachus. It treats of the conduct and sufferings of Ulysses, the father of Telemachus. The picture which it exhibits is that of a brave man struggling with adversity; by a wise use of events, and, with an inimitable presence of mind under difficulties, forcing out a way for himself through the severest trials to which human life can be exposed; with enemies natural and preternatural surrounding him on all sides. The agents in this tale, besides men and women, are giants, enchanters, sirens: things which denote external force or internal temptations, the twofold danger which a wise fortitude must expect to encounter in its course in this world. The fictions contained in it will be found to comprehend some of the most admired inventions of Grecian mythology.

The ground-work of the story is as old as the *Odyssey*, but the moral and the colouring are comparatively modern. By avoiding the prolixity which marks the speeches and the descriptions in Homer, I have gained a rapidity to the narration, which I hope will make it more attractive and give it more the air of a romance to young readers, though I am sensible that by the curtailment I have sacrificed in many places the manners to the passion, the subordinate characteristics to the essential interest of the story. The attempt is not to be considered as seeking a comparison with any of the direct translations of the *Odyssey*, either in prose or verse, though if I were to state the obligations which I have had to one obsolete<sup>79</sup> version, I should run the hazard of depriving myself of the very slender degree of reputation which I could hope to acquire from a trifle like the present undertaking.'

Preface, *The Adventures of Ulysses* (1808)

At the very opening of his preface, Lamb made a contentious, but decisive statement: he called his interpretation of the events of the Homeric poem not an adaptation of the *Odyssey*, but rather a 'supplement to the Adventures of Telemachus',

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<sup>79</sup> The translation of Homer by Chapman in the reign of James I'.

namely Fénelon's work. More explicitly, he rejects the direct comparison of his work with any translation of the Homeric poem, 'either in prose or verse'. This appears to be a high piece of provocation by Lamb, calling Ulysses the 'father of Telemachus', but by immediately directing his readership (both parents and children) to Fénelon's critically established work, this is actually a strategy that works on several levels. A later letter from Charles Lamb to Charles Lloyd the elder, offering feedback on Lloyd's own translation of part of the *Odyssey* (in this case on Lloyd's version of *Od.* 3.200), suggests that Lamb was fully aware of the consequences of his choice to invoke Fénelon, rather than the *Odyssey*:

'I doubt if Homer had any such idea as we have when we talk of *striving to excel in virtue*. I am afraid the phrase is more correspondant to the Telemachus of Fenelon than of Homer. Orestes' revengeful slaughter of Aegisthus is the model to which Nestor directs Telemachus, something different from what we mean by virtue.'  
(1809) (1978: 46)

Lamb advises Lloyd, writing a translation for adults, that he should attempt to emulate the Homeric poem, rather than Fénelon: whilst this letter was written shortly after the publication of *The Adventures of Telemachus*, it strongly suggests that the differentiation of the two texts by Lamb meant that he was consciously trying to associate *The Adventures of Ulysses* with Fenelon for his edifying benefit. The 'ground-work of the story', Lamb admits, is from the *Odyssey*, but the 'moral' and 'colouring', which take precedence, are more recent. It is *The Adventures of Telemachus*, not *The Adventures of Ulysses* which will provide the universally admired, morally edifying reading of the *Odyssey*. Lamb hoped that forging a link between his own work and that of Fénelon was a safer bet, both critically, and for his young readership. By defining his own criteria of comparison, Lamb side-steps the issue of being directly compared to the Homeric poem, or indeed any recent versions of it, in recognition of his market.

Whilst Fénelon was a convenient predecessor for Lamb, this association between the two works was also liberating: his attempt to create a parasitic relationship with *The Adventures of Telemachus* also helped to bolster his defence against the parts of the Homeric poem he already knew to be the most contentious. Fénelon had defended classical literature *in toto*, but his work he had not included dramatically fantastic elements, such as monsters or witches, which Lamb had to negotiate in the *Odyssey*. In

order to include those, Lamb appears to evoke the form of allegorizations from late antiquity that preceded Fénelon as part of his defence: reading the ‘giants, enchanters [and] sirens’ as personal tests of character. Yet framed in light of *The Adventures of Telemachus*, the explanations offered by Lamb – that these fantastic creatures represent ‘external force or internal temptations’ – evoke the opulence of Fénelon’s court of Sesostris, or the temptations of the nymph Eucharis whom the enchanted Telemachus is forced by Mentor to leave. The ‘course’ Ulysses follows is also one faced by the child reader – a demonstrative model made explicit for a child audience by Fénelon. Building this link with *The Adventures of Telemachus* allows both didactic and recreational readers to find what they are looking for: or at least, that was what Lamb intended.

iii. ‘The manners to the passion’: Lamb, Chapman, and Pope.

The ‘obsolete version’ of the *Odyssey* that Lamb had used in the process of creating *The Adventures of Ulysses* was the c. 1613–4 version of George Chapman, as revealed in an 1808 letter from Lamb to Manning:

‘I have done two books since the failure of my farce, they will both be out this summer. The one is a Juvenile Book, *The Adventures of Ulysses*, intended to be an introduction to the Reading of *Telemachus*! – it is done out of the *Odyssey*, not from the Greek – I would not mislead you – nor yet from Pope’s *Odyssey*, but from an older translation of one Chapman.’ (1808) (1975: 272)

The influence of Odyssean receptions of previous generations upon Lamb had broadened to include translations for adults, and not simply the didactic text of Fénelon. The use of Chapman was not purely pragmatic (as Riehl 1980: 98 has argued) – Lamb was not simply creating a muddled version of Chapman’s translation, corrected by his own relatively limited knowledge of Greek when it strayed too far. Instead, Lamb’s choice to use Chapman’s translation, when explored in depth, illustrates the stylistic and literary associations that the author invoked in his work. Moreover, the timing of his publication shows his contemporary edge – articulating key Romantic cultural shifts ahead of his more renowned peers.

Chapman's translation would be immortalized in the 1816 sonnet by John Keats, 'On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer', which describes the experience of reading this translation:

'Much have I travell'd in the realms of gold,  
And many goodly states and kingdoms seen;  
Round many western islands have I been  
Which bards in fealty to Apollo hold.  
Oft of one wide expanse had I been told  
That deep-brow'd Homer ruled as his demesne;  
Yet did I never breathe its pure serene  
Till I heard Chapman speak out loud and bold:  
Then felt I like some watcher of the skies  
When a new planet swims into his ken;  
Or like stout Cortez when with eagle eyes  
He star'd at the Pacific—and all his men  
Look'd at each other with a wild surmise—  
Silent, upon a peak in Darien.' (1978: 64)

For Keats, the epiphanic response to Homer was only enabled by Chapman's verse, and he articulated this sublimity in terms of travel. The domain of the Homeric poems become the 'realms of gold' and 'goodly states' in the West – familiar, but impenetrable – which are then reimagined as exotic foreign lands discovered by conquistadors upon the unlocking of the Homeric realm via Chapman's translations. Yet, as Goldhill 2002: 186–7 argues, for all his self-characterization as the Odyssean traveller who has mastered classical poetry, the transformative act of reading Chapman belies his intrusion into an area that he has no inherent right to, and no full understanding of. The poem embodies the distancing between Keats and classical scholarship, via an education and a mode of reading which did not meet aristocratic standards: 'The provocation isn't merely that Keats is reading (just) a translation, but that he is just 'looking into' it, not reading or learning it' (2002:186). Whilst Byron could dismiss Keats' 'piss a bed poetry' (Levinson 1988:18), Lamb's usage of this cruder and less refined translation that he held to promote the recreational experience of reading Homer over and above scholarly study was subversive. As Aske 1985:16 notes, Keats' sonnet depends on the irony that is it 'not Homer but Chapman's Homer whom the poet hears 'speak out loud and bold'', which raises the possibility that 'the voice of the translator could even, indeed, erase – drown– the original voice' (1985:43). Despite the clear personal investments made by both Godwin and Lamb into their publications for

children, children's literature could not stake the same centrality to criticism as literature designed for adults, and therefore could perhaps operate in a less visible fashion. Keats, in his use of Chapman, reflected a broader emergence of anti-scholarly attitudes and middle-class investment in classics: Lamb, in producing his *Odyssey* for children, would reflect a similar interest over a decade earlier.

The effect of Chapman upon Lamb was noted in a letter to Coleridge in 1802:

'I have just finished Chapman's Homer. Did you ever read it? it has most the continuous power of interesting you all along, like a rapid original, of any: & in the uncommon excellence of the more finish'd parts goes beyond Fairfax or any of 'em...Cowper's dam'd blank verse detains you every step with some heavy Miltonism- Chapman gallops off with you his own free pace... I will tell you more about Chapman and his peculiarities in my next, I am much interested in him.' (1802) (1976: 82-3)

Lamb found Chapman revelatory: it would be another six years until his close friend Coleridge would comment on the translation in a letter to Sara Hutchinson (Wordsworth's sister-in-law) – an action that Nicolson 2014: 19 presents as the origins of the discovery of Chapman by the Romantic poets. The freedom with which Chapman appeared to dictate his own imagery and pace was particularly appealing to Lamb. Even more so was the nonconformist quality of Chapman's verse compared to more recent translations of the Homeric poems – including Cowper's *Odyssey* from 1791, which took a more restrained, and more formally structured approach.<sup>80</sup> Above all, Chapman's text was anathema to the Homeric translations of Alexander Pope (*Iliad*, 1715; *Odyssey*, 1725) that embodied the eighteenth-century taste for style, elegance, and refinement (see Gillespie 2011: 32). Lamb's particular distaste for Pope's style was made clear in his correspondence with Lloyd on the latter's translation of the *Odyssey* in 1809:

'You have done nearly a third; preserve and let us see the whole. I am sure I should prize it for its Homeric plainness and truth above the confederate jumble of Pope, Broome and Fenton which goes under Pope's name, and is far inferior to his *Iliad*.' (Marrs 1978: 47)

The critical speculation that Pope's *Odyssey* was actually a collaboration served to further undermine the work, but the emphasis was clear: though Lamb seems to hold

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<sup>80</sup> The reference to Fairfax possibly refers to the 1635 translation of Tasso's *La Gerusalemme liberata*.

Pope's *Iliad* in some regard, Lamb did not consider Pope's mannered style appropriate for the *Odyssey*. In his eyes, it was not capable of unlocking the 'truth' in the poetry, and with it, the sense of wonder and awe that Lamb was so keen to incorporate into his own take on the *Odyssey*. As Nicolson 2014: 24 argues: 'Politeness had dressed Homer in felicity, when his underlying qualities are more like this: martial, huge, struggling through jungle, dense, disturbing and then providing that moment of revelatory release, of a calm pacific vision emerging on to what had been fields of storm or battle'. When Lamb said in his preface that he was sacrificing 'the manners to the passion', this was not some unfortunate collateral of abbreviating a work for a children's book: this was a conscious decision to base his work outside of conventional contemporary preferences, and literarily, an ideological attempt to represent the Homeric narrative in its full potential. In making this declaration, Lamb summarizes a key cultural shift of the century – all in an understated, unpretentious version of the *Odyssey* for children – and before the emblematic poem of Keats.

Keats described the freedom of being able to 'breathe' Homeric poetry thanks to Chapman – a 'passion' that would become synonymous with Romanticism. Nicolson describes how *On First Looking Into Chapman's Homer* captures the moment that the Keats was 'shocked into a moment of recognition, of what the Greeks called *anagnōrisis*, when a clogging surface is stripped away and the essence for which you have been hungering is revealed' (2014: 20). Lamb, in his letter to Coleridge, celebrates the release of a galloping pace and 'continuous power' – the *Odyssey* was made new in the face of the constraints of the strictures and finesse of Pope. In this light, the notion of 'Homeric plainness' was particularly important to Lamb. Whilst the Ancients had promoted the sublime, but not the baseness that they perceived in the characters of ancient epic, Lamb saw value in what he perceived as the primitive qualities of the Homeric poems. He told Lloyd:

'What I seem to miss, and what certainly everybody misses in Pope, is a certain savage-like plainness of speaking in Achilles – a sort of indelicacy – the heroes in Homer are not half civilised, they utter all cruel, all the selfish, all the *mean thoughts* even of their nature, which it is the fashion of our great men to keep in. I cannot, in lack of Greek, point to any one place – but I remember the general feature as I read him at school. But your principles and turn of mind would, I have no doubt, lead you to *civilize* his phrases, and sometimes to *half christen* them.' (1809) (Marrs 1978: 17)



The separation of the ancient world from the modern day was fully embraced by Lamb. The Homeric heroes, he argued, did not belong in a Christianized world of courtesies and repressed feeling that he saw as typical of his own time. Lamb draws a picture of the Homeric poems as: 'otherness itself: impolite, manly, cosmic, wild, enormous' (Nicolson 2014: 24). Nicolson draws this reception into the present day when describing his own experience with the *Odyssey*: the Homeric poems had been 'otherness itself' – at school, Nicolson was alienated by the vocabulary, the metre, and the nature of Homeric gods and their universe, and its apparent lack of direct relation to modern life. His own (somewhat Romantic) revelation took place on a sailing voyage from Ireland: he outlines the vastness of the seas which were at times, 'huge' with 'the whole of the bow plunging into them', whilst their boat which had seen substantial in the harbor, seemed insubstantial in the Atlantic (2014: 7) – but upon reading the *Odyssey* after this voyage, what he supposed to be an archane and distant text was now for him about the present, reflecting his own 'wild' and 'enormous' experience as an adult.

Nicolson suggests that the *Odyssey* does not belong to the politesse of the classroom: it does not speak most effectively there. Lamb too remembered the efforts of his schoolmasters to suppress the less restrained elements of the poem, but he also remembers the parts which he felt were overlooked by a didactic approach. The fact that Achilles can be characterized as 'savage-like' in his speech, and the impact that this sense of meanness had upon Lamb from his own childhood reading suggests that this was feeding into the mix of tales that had featured the cannibals and shipwrecks on primitive islands. By invoking his own childhood memories, Lamb also pits the plain-speaking lack of propriety with childhood recreation, whilst Pope's civilizing phrases appear to reflect the control of the adult world. Lamb's children's literature, which could not demand a place in the critical mainstream, was expressing and pre-empting the new Romantic upheaval in reading Homeric poetry.

Lamb was also stirred by the ability of translations of past generations to speak with a novel authority in the contemporary world. The previously mentioned letter to Charles Lloyd also offered an insight into Lamb's linguistic preferences with regard to Homeric poetry, where he suggested edits to Lloyd's translation concerning

phraseology. Out of eight individual minor comments, six are concerned with language that Lamb feels is too modern. His first comment explains his position:

“Parade of dress” [ref to *Od.* 1.163–5] strikes the ear as too modern; though in reality the modernist English is not more removed from Greek than the ancientest, yet the imagination is unwilling to receive a word in a Translation of Homer which has not the sanction of years.’ (1978: 46)

For Lamb, basing *The Adventures of Ulysses* on Chapman gave it a different kind of authority: the dependence on the imagination stirred by older translations, via their cultural remoteness. The translations of the modern day were simply not enough to spark the imagination: the unfamiliarity of Chapman’s style was key to making the *Odyssey* an engaging poem. Moreover, as both Lamb and Godwin believed that the imagination was itself essential to developing the child reader, there was also a moral impetus for a text with an archaic edge. The ‘free pace’ of Chapman seemed to fit the dramatic adventure story that Lamb wanted to write, and the archaic language emphasized the exoticness and historical remoteness of the ancient world – which is one way of circumventing the moral issues raised by the *Odyssey* when adapted for children. The ‘new planet’ of Homer (and of Keats), enabled by Chapman, was ripe for didactic exploration, before poetic exploitation.

Lamb seems to have directly summarized some passages from Chapman, particularly those of the most memorable moments, modernising the language but retaining some of the archaic language for effect:

“Cyclop! Take  
A boll of wine from my hand, that may make  
Way for the man’s flesh thou haste eate, and show  
What drinke our ship held...” (Chapman, 9.473-476)

“Cyclop,’ he said, ‘take a bowl of wine from the hand of your guest: it may serve to digest the man’s flesh that you have eaten, and shew what drink our ship held before it went down...” (Lamb, 1808: 13)

Lamb's dialogue overwhelmingly echoes Chapman's turn of phrase:<sup>81</sup> both the broader patterns and specifics of speech are remarkably similar ('(show/shew) what drink our ship held'). Lamb's thoughts were of Chapman over and above the Homeric text, which he acknowledges in the preface he has not kept as faithfully to as some might prefer. His request that he not be directly compared to any other version was surely in light of this acknowledgement: he knew he was not writing a translation but an attempt to encapsulate the character of the Homeric narrative – the essential interest of the poem he implies, is primarily the narrative, (which for Lamb, is predominantly Odysseus' travels) above the linguistic details. Despite the heavy use of Chapman's translation, this should not be taken as being indicative of Lamb holding Homer in disregard. The narrative of the Homeric poems greatly motivated him, as the previous letter to Lloyd continued, to whom he had been offering broad comments on his translations of part of both the *Iliad* and the *Odyssey*:

'Homer is perfect prattle, tho' exquisite prattle, compared to the deep oracular voice of Milton. In Milton you love to stop, and saturate your mind with every great image or sentiment; in Homer you want to go on, to have more of his agreeable narrative.' (1978: 23)

It was the narrative of the *Odyssey* that appealed to Lamb's younger self: by placing his esteem for the poem in the narrative, Lamb had no qualms about writing a prosaic version for a young audience. His remark that the subject of a work 'almost involuntarily' changes how verse appears indicates that his approach to poetry was built on associations of topic, plot, and genre. The second half of the preface lays out the specific locations where this attitude abbreviates the *Odyssey* for children. Lamb's avoidance of what he calls the 'prolixity' of Homer in reality discards many features that are central to both Homeric and broader traditions of oral poetry. We find that there are no Homeric epithets and elements on a wider scale, such as ring composition, have also deliberately been edited out. Whilst the preface says that Lamb wanted to 'make [the *Odyssey*] more attractive and give it more the air of a romance to young readers', which suggests he perceived a degree of technical, linguistic work to popularize the text for a young audience, unsurprisingly given the letter to Lloyd, he seems largely preoccupied with the story-telling.

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<sup>81</sup> Riehl 1980: 97 uses the Cyclops' rejection of the gods as another example that works in a similar way.

The combined influence of Chapman's 'free pace' and the use of Fénelon as a point of departure, led to perhaps the most definitive and enduring feature of Lamb's adaptation. Lamb's work begins as Homer and Fénelon did, in *medias res*, but uses a much later point in the Homeric narrative as the inspiration for his opening: his decision to begin with *Odyssey* 9 became the standard opening of the narrative for subsequent versions of the poem for children until the present day. *The Adventures of Telemachus* seems to have played a key role in Lamb's decision to begin his narrative with Book 9, rather than Book 1, or even Book 5. Rather than recounting the Telemachy (which was after all, not retold by Fénelon), Lamb integrates the arrival of Ulysses in Ithaca with an expository passage that loosely fills in Telemachus' own travels:

'...the goddess told [Ulysses] how...she had put it into the heart of the prince, to go and seek his father in far countries; how in the shape of Mentor she had borne him company in his long search; which, though failing, as she meant it should fail, in its first object, had yet had this effect, that through hardships he had gathered wisdom, and wherever his footsteps had been, he had left such memorials of his worth, as the fame of Ulysses's son was already blown throughout the world...'The goddess herself having ordered the course of his adventures, that the time of his return should correspond with the return of Ulysses, that they might together concert measures how to repress the power and insolence of those wicked suitors. This the goddess told him; but of the particulars of his son's adventures, of his having been detained in the Delightful Island, which his father had so lately left, of Calypso, and her nymphs, and the many strange occurrences which may be read with profit and delight in the history of the prince's adventures.'  
(1808: 309)

Lamb's reference to the 'history of the prince's adventures' is not specific, but his recollection of Telemachus' stay with Calypso is an explicit reference to not the Homeric *Odyssey*, but rather *The Adventures of Telemachus*: between Fénelon and Lamb the actual Telemachy is made redundant. In both cases, the Telemachus of the *Odyssey* has the potential, but not the practical substance to be turned into a didactic paradigm – he must either be reimagined in new scenarios, or the focus shifted to his father. For Lamb to adapt the *Telemachy* would surely invite direct comparison: he may well have felt that it was dangerous to overlap his own work too closely with Fénelon's novel; given the popularity of *The Adventures of Telemachus* it may not have been a good commercial bet, or perhaps Lamb considered it to be simply not necessary, if it were true that 'the

fame of Ulysses's son was already blown throughout the world'. Yet, this was also another way for Lamb conveniently to avoid direct comparison with the Homeric poem. The decision to begin with Book 9 was a way of Lamb associating, but also distancing himself from his source materials – much like Ovid's construction of his *Heroides* around the gaps left by the hypotext, which allowed him a stronger degree of control in how they could be exploited..

In drawing the boundaries between his own work and Fénelon's, *Odyssey* 9 provided a good alternative starting point. Odysseus' self-narrated tales, as told to Alcinous, are naturally ring-fenced by the change to a first-person narrative that might make this a natural place to begin, but this is surely not the sole reason. It would be easy to argue that Lamb had fewer obligations to keep faithfully to the Homeric narrative. Riehl 1980: 96 argues that Lamb's audience were even less familiar with Homer than the subject of his previous publication for children, Shakespeare, whose works had been incorporated in prose form in chapbooks and songbook publications (Richmond, 2008: 9), and so with the *Odyssey* he could be freer with his periphrasis of the text. Educational provisions for working-class children tended to be focused heavily on the Bible (Neuberg 1971: 39, 42, 48; 57–63), but for the middle and upper classes, Shakespeare was frequently found in classroom texts such as William Enfield's *The Speaker* (1774): Lamb himself remarked that lines of Shakespeare could be found 'in the mouths of school-boys' everywhere as a result of Enfield's publication.<sup>82</sup> However, this was more than an author writing as little as he could get away with – Lamb had a very clear idea of which parts of the Homeric poem he wished to retell based on Fénelon and his own passion for 'wild tales'. Lamb's taste for adventurous and dangerous stories drove this decision: by starting at Book 9, Lamb could go straight into the kind of adventure-driven story that he had so enjoyed as a boy.

The influence of Chapman's translation was also apparent from the very beginning of *The Adventures of Ulysses*. A direct comparison between the opening passages of Book 9 of Chapman's *Odyssey* and *The Adventures of Ulysses* illustrates both the close relationship between the two works, and Lamb's specific responses:

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<sup>82</sup> 'On the Tragedies of Shakespeare Considered with Reference to Their Fitness for Stage Representation' in *Miscellaneous Prose by Charles and Mary Lamb* (Lucas 1912: 15). For more on Shakespeare as educational tool in this period, see Rumbold 2011: 92–8 in Burnett (ed.) 2011 *The Edinburgh Companion to Shakespeare and the Arts*.

'I am Ulysses Laertiades,  
 The feare of all the world for policies,  
 For which my facts as high as heaven resound.  
 I dwell in Ithaca, Earth's most renown'd,  
 All-over shadow'd with the Shake-leaf hill,  
 Tree-fam'd Neritus, whose near confines fill  
 Ilands [sic] a number, well inhabited,  
 That under my observance taste their bread –  
 Dulichius, Samos, and the full-of-food  
 Zacynthus, likewise grac't with store of wood.  
 But Ithaca, though in the seas it lie,  
 Yet lies she so aloft she casts her eye  
 Quite over all the neighbour Continent –  
 Farre Northward situate, and (being lent  
 But litle [sic] favour of the Morn and Sunne,  
 With barren rocks and cliffs is over-runne,  
 And yet of hardie youths a Nurse of Name;  
 Nor could I see a Soile, where ere I came,  
 More sweet and wishfull. Yet from hence was I  
 Withheld with horror by the Deitie,  
 Divine Calypso, in her cavie house,  
 Enflam'd to make me her sole Lord and  
 Spouse.  
 Circe Ææa too, (that knowing dame,  
 Whose veines the like affections did inflame),  
 Detaind me likewise. But to neither's love  
 Could I be tempted—which doth well approve,  
 Nothing so sweete is as our cuntry's earth,  
 And joy of those from whom we claime our  
 birth.  
 Though roofes far richer we farre off possesse,  
 Yet (from our native), all our more is less.  
 To which as I contended, I will tell  
 The much-distress-conferring facts that fell  
 By Jove's divine prevention, since I set  
 From ruin'd Troy my first foote in retreat.  
 From Ilion ill wind cast me on the Coast  
 The Cicons hold, where I emloid mine hoast  
 For Ismarus, a Citie built just by  
 My place of landing; of which Victory  
 Made me expunger. I depeopl'd it,  
 Slue all the men, and did their wives remit,  
 With much spoile taken; which we did divide,  
 That none might need his part...'

(*Od.* 9.19–40, Nicoll 2000: 152)

'This history tells of the wanderings of Ulysses and his followers in their return from Troy, after the destruction of that famous city of Asia by the Grecians. He was inflamed with a desire of seeing again, after a ten years' absence, his wife and native country, Ithaca. He was king of a barren spot, and a poor country in comparison of the fruitful plains of Asia, which he was leaving, or the wealthy kingdoms which he touched upon in his return; yet, wherever he came, he could never see a soil which appeared in his eyes half so sweet or desirable as his country earth. This made him refuse the offers of the goddess Calypso to stay with her, and partake of her immortality in the delightful island; and this gave him strength to break from the enchantments of Circe, the daughter of the Sun.

From Troy, ill winds cast Ulysses and his fleet upon the coast of the Cicons, a people hostile to the Grecians. Landing his forces, he laid siege to their chief city, Ismarus, which he took, and with it much spoil, and slew many people.'

*The Adventures of Ulysses* (1808: 256)

There are a number of details that emerge from this comparative reading. It still closely

resembles the Greek text in parts (cf. *Od.* 9.39–42<sup>83</sup> with the last lines of the quoted passage from Lamb). However, the direct influence of Chapman is borne out in the adjectives which seep into Lamb’s prose: Ithaca is ‘barren’, ‘sweet’ and ‘desirable’ (cf. Chapman’s ‘wishful’); the temptresses Calypso and Circe are ‘enflamed’ with passion, whilst Lamb’s Ulysses is ‘inflamed’ with desire (a more chaste spin for the young readers) for the sight of his ‘country earth’; both men’s Ulysses ‘slew’ and took ‘spoil’ – fragmentary contributions perhaps, but ones which collectively contribute to the ongoing dissemination of Chapman within Lamb. What is distinctive is the comparative brevity of Lamb’s version: this is not unexpected, given his remark in the preface that he wanted to lend a ‘rapidity’ to the narrative, but the challenges of directing this to a young readership is made evident in phrases of Chapman’s that are hard to absorb, such as the double-hyphenated ‘much-distress-conferring’ or the fact the opening is substantially longer than the same account of the Homeric poem. The effects of such abbreviation are noticeable, motivated by Lamb’s desire to imitate the rapidity of the narrative that he had admired so much in Chapman: the surrounding geography of Ithaca is omitted, and the exact details of the raid on Ismarus (‘I depeopled it...and did their wives remit’) did not suit the figure of a heroic Odysseus that his work sought to construct. Though Lamb had amended Chapman’s language, his use of this translation brought the threat posed to the contemporary understanding of the *Odyssey* by *The Adventures of Ulysses* to the fore. As the response to *The Adventures of Ulysses* showed, the literary establishment were not yet prepared to pass on to the next generation a version of the *Odyssey* that did not advocate a considered, if not scholarly reading of the poem. Further still, the consequences of Lamb’s association with this particular translation would be critically damaging because of its perceived incompatibility with children’s literature.

#### iv. Critical reactions

Ultimately, Godwin’s nervousness would be vindicated by reviewers’ reactions to Lamb’s work – the editor pre-empted only some of the critique, and may himself have

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<sup>83</sup> Ἰλιόθεν με φέρων ἄνεμος Κικόνεσσι πέλασσαν,  
Ἰσμάραφ· ἔνθα δ’ ἐγὼ πόλιν ἔπραθον, ὤλεσα δ’ αὐτούς.  
ἐκ πόλιος δ’ ἀλόχους καὶ κτήματα πολλὰ λαβόντες  
δασσάμεθ’, ὡς μή τις μοι ἀτεμβόμενος κίοι ἴσης.

underestimated the hostile reaction he and Lamb would face. The primary concern of the reviewers was the focus on the fantastic adventures led by the restructuring of the poem. Though Lamb had justified his abridgement in the preface as lending rapidity to the narrative, which he saw as being in demand from young readers, such formalities could not assuage the overriding moral concerns of some critics. Upon publication, *The Anti-Jacobin Review* produced a damning review:

‘Mr Charles Lamb is not a Fénelon; and these Adventures possess no portion of the merit which belongs to the inimitable production of the archbishop of Cambray. They are full of incidents, unnatural and impossible; and although ‘the fictions contained in it will,’ in the author’s opinion, ‘be found to comprehend some of the most admired inventions of Grecian mythology,’ we are not aware of the advantage to be derived by children from such fictions. As to a moral lesson, if the book contain any such, it has certainly escaped our observation.’ (1809: 80–1)

To today’s readers, it seems almost ridiculous or ironic to criticise a work that engages with the *Odyssey* for being full of ‘unnatural and impossible’ incidents, so strong is their place in the narrative from our perspective – but for conservative critics such as *The Anti-Jacobin*, the dangerous creatures of the *Odyssey* were not in step with contemporary didactic thinking, and indeed were not necessarily central to their perceptions of the *Odyssey* (since after all in Homer they feature only in an extended tale offered by Odysseus, a tale that represents a small proportion of the poem, three books out of twenty-four). According to this reviewer, it was Fénelon’s work (now understood primarily as didactic) and not the *Odyssey* itself, which had become the primary text of aspiration for children’s authors. On the *Odyssey* he kept silent. As such, it is Lamb, and not Homer, who bears the responsibility for the narrative, according to the reviewer: Fénelon’s originality had given him moral authority precisely because *The Adventures of Telemachus* had been tailored for a young reader. *The Adventures of Telemachus* provided a benchmark to ‘prove’ that it is possible to reinvent the *Odyssey* in a manner which was morally edifying: to follow Fénelon’s ideas about where the morality lay in the Homeric text was the safer approach for a children’s author. However, though the reviewer’s criticism echoes the complaints of the Moderns regarding the improbability of the narrative, the Moderns had not discounted the *Odyssey* outright as children’s literature – Perrault only put it that the recreational elements of the poem had little



utility for readers older than twelve. In an era of an established children's literature, the *Anti-Jacobin* reviewer was dismissing the *Odyssey* for children outright: the Homeric poem was in a precarious position. By explaining his restructured take on the *Odyssey* as a companion to Fénelon's work, Lamb may have attempted to sidestep direct comparisons with the Homeric poem, but it is noticeable that the reviewer failed to comment on the morality of the *Odyssey* itself, suggesting an embarrassment about that: it was possible that Lamb was faithful, in which case there was in fact a problem with ancient myth. Still, the reviewer could not quite come out with such a statement, because of the authority of the ancient poem. As previous generations had found, the allegorical possibilities of the *Odyssey* were too ambiguous – they were deemed too lightly drawn to have the didactic impact of Fénelon's travel narrative, and were quite possibly too fantastic to speak to children in an era where the most commercially and critically successful children's literature was often heavily grounded in real life. Still even hostile reviews did not quite take on Homer himself.

The critical rejection of Lamb's treatment of the *Odyssey* continued. *The Anti-Jacobin* was renowned for its unsubtle, archconservative attacks on many of Godwin's circle (de Montluzin 1988:29 notes the mauling of Byron's *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage* for its 'irreligion' and William Hazlitt's *Political Essays* for its 'political and religious Radicalism'), so the venom of the attack on Lamb's work is unsurprising in this regard. However, proof that the criticisms made by *The Anti-Jacobin* were not fundamentally political – and instead rather about the representation of the *Odyssey* – can be found in publications that were ideologically more in sympathy with Lamb's work, such as *The Monthly Review*. Its founder was Ralph Griffiths, the publisher of John Cleland's scandalous *A Woman of Pleasure* (commonly known as *Fanny Hill*), and, like William Godwin, a famous non-conformist and liberal (Foxon 1965: 57). Despite being of a more politically sympathetic background, *The Monthly Review* of May 1809, similarly disappointed in a perceived lack of morality, also took issue with the focus on the adventures of Ulysses:

‘The adventures of Ulysses, related in prose, without the circumlocutions, repetitions, and unnecessary episodes which occur in the *Odyssey*, cannot fail to make a very entertaining and marvellous story. They are capable, however, of doing much more; since the circumstances immediately preceding the catastrophe are of the most affecting nature, and abound with those delicate traits which are not

more powerful in surprising the feelings, than in improving the virtuous propensities of the youthful mind. Mr. Lamb has been much too sparing of these particulars; and his omission of the hero's interview with old Laertes, and more especially of his recognition by Euryclea, appears to us highly injudicious.' (1809: 105)

The *Monthly Review* used the *Odyssey*, rather than the more recent work of Fénelon, as the central frame of reference for the review, and rightly suggested that the second half of the Homeric poem was disappearing from view (a new critique then, but an idea that endures today, as Part IV examines). As Godwin had suggested in 1802, the purpose of children's literature was, for this anonymous critic, to cultivate the inner child – where Godwin was concerned with 'profound feeling' and 'genuine morality', the reviewer is also concerned with 'surprising the feelings' and 'improving the virtuous propensities of the youthful mind'. Moreover, the reviewer is happy to praise the *Odyssey* for its recreational value and 'marvellous' episodes. The similarities in approach, as well as the established political sympathies of the journal, in addition to the primary reference to the *Odyssey*, suggests a reviewer who also favoured adventurous, imaginative tales. Yet the agenda set by Lamb, which Godwin had tried to moderate, was at odds with alternative claims to the sites of values in the Homeric poem. Even Godwin's editorial opinion was overly optimistic about how this narrative would be received: despite his objections to the graphic nature of certain scenarios, Godwin had raised no complaints about the drastic reduction of episodes set on Ithaca, which concerned the sympathetic review. The two reviews were using different frames of reference, one the Homeric poem, and the other Fénelon, and yet they both suggested that Lamb had missed the mark by not framing the episodes in an appropriately edifying fashion.

Both reviews bemoaned a lack of grounding of the adventures in reality – the 'domestic' scenes in Ithaca or other settings that depict a society with recognisable political institutions and social structures, especially the home. The second reviewer acknowledges that there *are* moral lessons to be gained from the *Odyssey*, but the most beneficial selections are missing. Though neither Euryclea nor Laertes, appear in *The Adventures of Telemachus*, *The Monthly Review* reveals that they are still considered an essential part of the *Odyssey*. Fénelon's Telemachus had undertaken a great voyage, but the political nature of the locations of the work meant that the characters operated within structures familiar to young children from their own lives. Lamb's offence is his reliance on imagination: even where Lamb had tried to counter this in the preface, by

directing young readers to consider events of the Homeric narrative in relation to real life, the allegorical approach suggested was not overt enough. It was not necessarily travel, but the stories of fantastical creatures and supernatural encounters that seemed useless, if not dangerous, for children. Lamb, in reorganising the narrative of the Homeric poem to begin with the adventures of Book 9 onwards, had given these fantastic elements undue prominence. Stemming from opinions expressed by the Edgeworths, the adventure episodes themselves did not constitute sufficient moral fibre for young readers: further, it still does not appear socially acceptable yet for young children to read purely for the purposes of entertainment: *The Monthly Review* suggesting that the adventures are improved by the tempering – and didactic – role of the domestic scenes. To divide and abridge the *Odyssey* was to deprive it of its educational efficacy: the cachet of Homer alone was not enough to redeem Lamb's version of the poem.

Finally, there was one further aspect that meant that Lamb's work would receive limited attention upon its first publication. Lamb's reviewers also took particular issue with the recycling of Chapman, and they felt he had not censored the language appropriately for his audience. *The Monthly Review* had harsher comments to make in this light, stating:

‘The language here is liable to censure; and, perhaps on account of the author's having borrowed too largely from Chapman's obsolete translation, he is occasionally harsh and obscure, and sometimes borders on vulgarity. ‘A man, whose return the gods have set *their faces against*’ – ‘*In God's name, old father, if you have got a tale, make the most on't*’ (p.143.)...This is a style of phraseology which we are not anxious to hear in the mouths of the rising generation.’ (1809: 105)

The complaint here is not about the Homeric language, but the representation of Homeric language via English (though no complaint per se is made about its prosaic nature), and the spectre of the urbane Pope looms large in comments that are concerned with precise turns of phrase. Pope renders the first example as ‘Far hence is by unequal gods remov'd’ (14.73) – Lamb's relative bluntness is evident, and his lack of formality made evident by the second example, which is a novel insertion by Lamb, with Eumaeus advising Ulysses that Penelope may give him a cloak if he has a tale of her husband. Little concern is made for the brutal imagery that had preoccupied Godwin –

nevertheless, Lamb's positioning of the adventures as subservient to Fénelon was not sufficient to defend the perceived lapses in his own style.

Such comments presuppose an ideal of how these words should be expressed, and the value of phraseology, as a third reviewer noted in *The Annual Review of History and Literature*:

'The manners, however, appear to us to be the chief characteristics of that delightful poem, and the chief source of the interest which it creates. Mr. Lamb states his obligation to Chapman. The consequence, we fear, has been to produce an unpleasing inconsistency of style, by ingrafting antique phrases on modern diction.' (1808: 421)

The plain-speaking that Lamb had claimed 'everybody misses in Pope' because of the overriding praise for the 'manners' of the latter reveals the increasing divisions between sectors of the literary public – children, critical readers and the public. For these reviewers, a version of the *Odyssey* for children should speak to child readers in modern, rather than antiquated mode: young readers should enjoy the linguistic formalities of a version of the Homeric poem that spoke in a stylistic and aspirational fashion. By sacrificing the 'manners' of Pope's canonical translation, Lamb had sacrificed the eighteenth-century essence of the *Odyssey*, and replaced it with a coarse version that celebrated the remoteness and exoticism of the ancient world. The criticism faced by Lamb, in his attempt to present a wild and adventurous *Odyssey* with an alternative, analogous moral understanding and an archaic linguistic edge, opens up further the question of where it is acceptable for children's authors to edit their source material in relation to the Homeric poem. He was criticised for both not following the Homeric narrative faithfully enough but following Chapman's translation too carefully; and also for prioritising the narrative over the language – even though the point of reference for the latter was Pope, and not the Homeric poem. The reception of Lamb at this point reveals that the *Odyssey* as a hypotext for children's texts that purport to be a version of the poem is fragmented: whilst the broad shapes of the Homeric narrative provided the motivation for Lamb's work, the specifics of writing these texts is rooted in the present. It is also revealing about the nature of the *Odyssey* between different generations: this is not a poem that has been gradually destabilized by the interventions of successive cohorts. Rather, the possibilities enabled by the poem and its receptions have been embraced and encouraged by children's authors and editors, who are either keen

themselves, or are keen for others, to move the *Odyssey* away from the centre of the ancient world and outwards into contemporary era.

*The Adventures of Ulysses* resulted in an inversion of the roles that the two men behind the work were supposed to play. Godwin, the publisher had been proven right by the critics: at the beginning of the nineteenth-century, the *Odyssey* needed more moderation and a more overt morality to be lauded as children's literature. However, the sales vindicated Lamb: whilst the initial commercial success might be attributed to the role of *The Adventures of Ulysses* as a follow-up to *Tales from Shakespeare*, this cannot account for three reprints in Lamb's lifetime (Lamb died in 1834). While not a runaway success, this was no mean achievement. Lamb was more attuned to the popular taste for travel and adventure, which had not yet transitioned into a sphere of critical acclaim. Still, the ultimate and astounding success of *The Adventures of Ulysses* only really emerges from the longer-term picture of the nineteenth-century, which is the subject of the next chapter. Bearing in mind on-going developments in approaches to children's literature, the separation of audiences, varying editorial practices, and the increasing national and international outlook, the next chapter examines how Lamb's work was eventually exalted by practitioners of children's literature and classical scholarship alike, and how adventure became fortified as a means of resolution for some of the issues which Fénelon, Godwin, and Lamb, among others, had already faced and articulated.

Part III: 'Fairyland and Wonderland made real': Lamb's legacy in the nineteenth-century and beyond

"I'm very fond of Greek history, and everything about the Greeks. I should like to have been a Greek and fought the Persians, and then come home and have written tragedies, or else have been listened to by everybody for my wisdom, like Socrates, and have died a grand death" (Philip, you perceive, was not without a wish to impress the well-made barbarian with a sense of his mental superiority).

"Why, were the Greeks great fighters?" said Tom, who saw a vista in this direction. "Is there anything like David, and Goliath, and Samson in the Greek history? Those are the only bits I like in the history of the Jews."

"Oh, there are very fine stories of that sort about the Greeks – about the heroes of early times who killed the wild beasts, as Samson did. And in the *Odyssey* (that's a beautiful poem) there's a more wonderful giant than Goliath – Polypheme, who had only one eye in the middle of his forehead; and Ulysses, a little fellow, but very wise and cunning, got a red-hot pine tree and stuck it into this one eye, and made him roar like a thousand bulls".

"Oh, what fun!" said Tom, jumping away from the table, and stamping first with one leg and then the other. "I say, can you tell me all about those stories? because I shan't learn Greek, you know. Shall I?" he added, pausing in his stamping with a sudden alarm, lest the contrary might be possible. "Does every gentleman learn Greek? Will Mr. Stelling make me begin with it, do you think?"

"No, I should think not – very likely not," said Philip. "But you may read those stories without knowing Greek. I've got them in English."

George Eliot, *The Mill on the Floss*, 1860: 307–8

Tom Tulliver's conversation with his schoolmate Philip Wakem, from George Eliot's 1860 novel, *The Mill on the Floss*, highlights some of the key cultural reforms that were influencing the reception of the *Odyssey* in children's literature throughout the nineteenth century in England. The novel is roughly set in the 1820s (roughly dated by references to the Peninsular War 1860: 320–1) – the peak of Romantic Hellenism – but the novel is designed to resonate with Eliot's readers, as it has autobiographical tendencies, and the passage depends on a contemporary relevance concerning expectations of the reading preferences of young boys. Though not a novel for children itself, the dialogue between the two schoolboys provides a concise snapshot of some of the intertwining themes which, when combined, begin to provide a greater picture as to how and why Lamb's work, rather than that of Fénelon, proved to be a decisive adaptation of the *Odyssey* for children in the English-speaking world.

Tom's reaction on first hearing of Ulysses and Polyphemus is crucial: on being introduced to the *Odyssey*, his first instinct is that this narrative sounds 'fun' above all else. He is emblematic of young readers who can now expect to read for pleasure, and have a separate body of literature to turn to in order to fulfil a need for entertainment. Tom wants to read about the intrepid and the heroic – and the rise of Hellenism, along with adventure narratives, provided this excitement. Tom specified that he liked stories of 'fighters', however the *Odyssey* is the only specific text to be referenced in Philip's reply. Philip's superior taste meets Tom halfway – rather than detailing stories of the warriors of the *Iliad*, or the violence of the tragedies, or the oratorical trickery of Socrates, Philip chooses to respond by forging a parallel between Goliath and Polyphemus. His reply to Tom is predicated on the notion that from Greek literature, the fantastic and adventure-based tales like the *Odyssey* will be of greatest appeal – a specific, Lambian take on the Greek world, where there are tales of 'wild beasts' and 'wonderful giant[s]'. The more sophisticated and intellectual Philip imagines becoming an Athenian warrior: however, it is the *Odyssey*, which is associated with more popular thrills that appeals to the less studious Tom. Tom's childish literary interests illustrate, as Stray 2015: 92 argues, that Greek was the 'patron saint of vernaculars' and shows the nineteenth century separation of the 'impulse of Romantic Hellenism from scholarly study of Greek'. Philip qualifies the *Odyssey* as 'a beautiful poem' as if to draw it back to its civilizing roots, but Tom's excitement is predicated on him recognising that this novel story resonates with reading material aimed at him, and other boys, as such tales become more gendered.

The other significant appeal of the poem for Tom is, in part, its contrast with the didactic agenda set at school: the *Odyssey* is now a poem which boys enjoy without necessarily learning Greek, and without having to experience the unpleasant trappings of classical education. Tom's interest in Greek tales, but especially the *Odyssey*, is piqued, but both his intention and the facility to learn the original language are non-existent. Philip's response that Tom's interest in the *Odyssey* should not be impeded, as 'those stories' are available in English implies that classical myth, if not full translations of the *Odyssey*, were an active part of a market which was catering to young readers like Tom. The associations of gender and class that the study of Greek entailed, and even more importantly, the implicit value that such studies held have been well-explored by Stray 1998: 7–82, who argues that classical education was the definitive 'possession' and

signifier of the educated man in the nineteenth century (1998: 74). Certainly Philip, who is a little older than Tom, is very aware of the cultural cachet which Greek now holds – even going as far as to say that he ‘should like to have been a Greek’ and lived through their ancient military and cultural exploits, in the understanding that the invocation of Greece will impress Tom, but also adults. Even the hostile Tom understands that such studies are a privilege of masculinity (“Does every gentleman learn Greek?”), but though he is relatively well-educated (albeit not a natural scholar), it does not appear that he will be learning Greek, at least for the present. His secondary question (“Will Mr. Stelling make me begin with it?”) seems to imply that he knows how to answer his first – that an ideal gentleman does learn Greek, even if the reality of access is different.

Yet Tom’s insistence that his friend tells him the stories of Greek beasts and giants because he won’t learn the language in order to read them himself is reflective of a wider hostility towards formal classical learning. If he were to learn the language, his expectation is that he will learn about the Greek world primarily in an educational environment, and with its repetitive trappings (the ‘gerund-grind’ described by Stray 1998: 48) and the corporal punishments that became associated primarily with public schools (Stray 1998: 59).<sup>84</sup> A humorous letter to *Punch* magazine in 1866, identified by Stray 1995: 79, is written supposedly by an aggrieved Eton schoolboy who complains that Eton grammar is ‘beaten into my head every day’ – the same grammar that Tom repeatedly complains of throughout Eliot’s novel (1860: 257, 259, 282). There are no reports that Tom and Philip are beaten by Mr. Stelling, but Tom does go to bed nervously praying out loud to God: ‘and please to make me always remember my Latin’ (1860: 264). The scene might parrot a typical view of Victorian classical learning, but the specific appreciation of the *Odyssey* by Tom and Philip draws a more rounded picture. As Richardson 2015: 110 argues, elite identity was bound up with classics, but classics itself was fluid and unstable, being subject to admiration and ridicule. Tom’s formal learning might have represented the establishment, but the ability of the *Odyssey* to operate both within and beyond the institutions reflects how in reality, the boundaries of the ancient world ‘between high and low, insider and outsider, were always porous’ (2015: 125). After all, not even the intellectual Philip owns the *Odyssey* in Greek. Philip’s *Odyssey* is in English, suggesting that like Tom, he can appreciate it independently of the ‘gerund-grind’ as a piece of recreational reading, whilst Tom, in

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<sup>84</sup> For an overview of education in the Victoria era, see also Jenkyns 1980: 60–67.



desperate search of rollicking entertainment for boys, finds the poem fulfils this need whilst being outwardly respectable. Eliot broadens the picture of Victorian schoolboys detesting classical languages by drawing attention to the contemporary resonance of Greek (as opposed to Latin), but also suggests the ability of classical tales – as particularly the *Odyssey* – to continue to operate outside of the classroom.

The potential for learning recreationally reflects on the gendered nature of Tom's experience: the masculine exclusivity of the tales under discussion by Philip and Tom becomes apparent when thrown into relief by Tom's sister Maggie. Female readers were free from the didactic and social expectations of boys, but instead bound by restricted access and boundaries of propriety – nonetheless they may have been less cynical about classical studies, as Eliot explores through the intellectual pursuits of Maggie. Maggie is 'proud because she found [Latin] interesting' (1860: 275), and she goes as far as asking Mr. Stelling herself if he thought her capable of pursuing the same studies as her brother:

"Mr. Stelling," she said, that same evening when they were in the drawing-room, "couldn't I do Euclid, and all Tom's lessons, if you were to teach me instead of him?"  
"No, you couldn't," said Tom, indignantly. "Girls can't do Euclid; can they, sir?"  
"They can pick up a little of everything, I dare say," said Mr. Stelling.  
"They've a great deal of superficial cleverness; but they couldn't go far into anything. They're quick and shallow." (1860: 280–1)

In addition to the geometry of Euclid, 'all Tom's lessons' include the Latin she is so interested in, and Mr. Stelling responds to her by acknowledging the full curriculum and not only Euclid. Eliot sends up the gender boundaries of a classical education through the implications of the comments of Tom and Mr. Stelling. The author herself (George Eliot being the pseudonym of Mary Ann Evans), had, unusually, received a classical education, having been taught Latin and Greek by the head of Coventry Grammar School (Hardy 2006: xviii) – as such, this formal tutoring would have allowed her to empathise with Tom's endurance of Latin grammar. Like Tom, Eliot much preferred Greek, which was a lifelong passion (Haight 1968: 195), and she had finished reading the *Odyssey* by June 1855. Maggie serves to reflect Eliot's own intellectual pursuits and capabilities, and the obstructions that Eliot perceived were faced by nineteenth-century women. The passage is made frustratingly comical by Maggie's inherent potential, which is

illustrated throughout the novel in small moments, such as her ability to hazard a guess at the genre of text from its typesetting: “What are you reading about, in Greek?” she said. “It’s poetry – I can see that because the lines are so short.” (1860: 344). This is contrasted with the long, laborious efforts of her brother to wrestle with the ‘gerund-grind’, and yet her sex are considered incapable of being able to cope with the same dedication required. The only people throughout the novel with whom Maggie can share her intellectual interests, and specifically those in Latin and Greek, are all male. Whilst the accessibility of translations of the *Odyssey*, (as related by Philip) hints at an apparent establishment of the *Odyssey* as reading material for the middle classes, Tom is introduced to these texts by Philip, while Maggie is left doggedly to pursue her interests of her own accord. The circulating versions of the *Odyssey* in English for children made the poem practically more accessible to female readers. Yet in *The Adventures of Ulysses*, Lamb had reduced the significance of several female characters of the *Odyssey*, and the conscious association of the Odyssean narrative with boyhood was beginning to be made more explicitly than ever before.

Hagerman 2013: 35 argues that children of the Victorian period were ‘bombarded’ with ‘explicit and implicit’ signals as to the significance of the classics from the earliest years to adulthood, and acknowledges that classical prestige developed from less formal, and less explicit cultural factors, yet these factors are not explored to any significant extent in his work, or indeed in classical studies more broadly, which have focused more often on the value of formal education and universities. Children’s recreational pursuits, and particularly literature, would also prove a vital spearhead for the dissemination of these signals, which had a pragmatic, and imperialistic purpose. Several generations on from the childhood reading of Lamb and Godwin, travel and adventure became a prodigious theme in the attempt to secure the British imperial identity, and in particular, to provide future leaders for the Empire. The *Odyssey*, as a poem concerned with mastery and self-mastery, was ripe to be moulded into an embodiment of contemporary values that children’s authors foresaw as being essential for the younger generation. Classical paradigms were often invoked in regard to the Empire: Bradley 2010: 151–7 outlines how the Roman Empire was characterized by the Victorians for children as parallel to the British Empire, a kind of ‘giant gentleman’s club’ with no hint of ‘imperial abuse’ (2010: 152). With a greater need than ever before to protect the British imperial borders, children, and especially boys, were drawn into a

campaign which reinforced their superiority over non-British subjects of the Empire: Vasunia 2013: 228 has argued that the fundamental role of Classics in the education of the colonial administration was to differentiate between the colonizers and the colonized, even when the latter were encouraged to form part of the new administration. Yet it would also demarcate the differences within the colonizers themselves: leaders, managers and workers. Adventure could be used to promote a life of service to the Empire to all three categories, but only the first two groups were likely to encounter the *Odyssey* as a medium for this propaganda. Lamb's adventure-*Odyssey*, in a revised light, would provide a useful vehicle for feeding boys an idealised Victorian narrative of masculinity, with an explicit political purpose.

Both classical literature and imperial adventure stories were an essential part of a wider enterprise to protect young readers from a breadth of apparently pernicious reading material – most notably, 'penny bloods' or 'penny dreadfuls', which were full of fantastic and gory tales, both new and old, and associated with the lower classes (though, as I shall come to say, they had wealthier audiences too). Such publications were the consternation of conservative middle-class critics of children's literature, with one of the most renowned, Edward Salmon, commenting that:

'...the magazines, with certain notable exceptions, provided for the older boys and girls, are in every sense of the word, dreadfuls. There is no limit to their number or their pernicious influence, and they are by far the most serious phase of the question of literature for the rising generation...no element of sweetness and light ever finds its way into their columns, and that they are filled with stories of blood and revenge, of passion and cruelty, as improbably and often impossible in plot as their literary execution is contemptible.' (Salmon 1888: 184–5)

Such criticism harks back to the Modern critics of the *Odyssey* in Fénelon's era in the complaints of impossible plots, yet the differences between the poem and these penny dreadfuls illustrate how the *Odyssey* was no longer in a primarily defensive position. Salmon goes on to describe how the penny dreadfuls can be held morally accountable for the foolish exploits and serious crimes alleged to have been committed by real children of the time: a group of boys who set off down the Thames in a raft to reach Australia, a boy who is supposed to have shot dead his father and brother, a young clerk who attempted to use chloroform on his employer to steal from him, and two 'respectable' boys whose story revealed how:

‘... instead of studying Euclid and Delectus, their readings had been of the ‘Jack Sheppard’ and ‘Claude Duval’ style of literature in the penny dreadfuls, and they were now in Newgate awaiting their trial for burglary and half murdering an old housekeeper in some city offices...A man has no more right to publish a story exulting in crime than to commit crime itself.’ (Salmon 1888: 190–3)

Salmon only recounts the first three anecdotes in passing, but the idea that two ‘respectable’ boys could be so corrupted by their reading merits the greater account, betraying the real concern that children’s literature appears to pose a threat to the middle classes. Not only is it dangerous that boys will become morally bankrupt, but in particular, those that are supposed to be upstanding leaders of the community – the ones who should be studying their Euclid and more significantly, Delectus (an obsolete term for an elementary book of Greek or Latin, from Latin *deligere*) – will be corrupted in their future adulthoods. Moreover, these publications were cheaper and more accessible than ever before, and required a response. In turn, aspirational periodicals such as *The Boys’ Own Paper*, *The Boys’ Own Magazine*, and later on, titles such as *Union Jack* and *The Captain*, which were produced to direct the aspirations of middle class boys towards the service of the recently solidified British Empire. These publications would prove to be the most popular and accessible forms of literary material for children of this period, partly because of the parental sanction given in light of the penny dreadfuls.

Lamb’s *Odyssey* arguably featured several of the characteristics outlined in the first passage from Salmon, and canonical literature had been included in these penny dreadfuls, including *Robinson Crusoe* (O’Malley 2012: 169). As O’Malley 2011: 31, 33 outlines, Defoe’s work was already bowdlerized to remove the spiritual and religious elements in favour of the sensationalism of mutiny and cannibalism. The chapbook tradition that had formed part of Lamb’s own childhood, and had been so disapproved of by late eighteenth century moralists of children’s literature, had prepared *Robinson Crusoe* practically for the penny dreadful. At the same time, in its full Christian context, it could still maintain its parental and critical approval as children’s literature. Defoe’s work had been incorporated in such a way that children of, or children who would grow

up to be servants,<sup>85</sup> labourers,<sup>86</sup> gardeners,<sup>87</sup> clerks<sup>88</sup> and writers<sup>89</sup> would all read the work – illustrating the cross-class appeal and availability. Yet despite the ability of the sensational aspects of the *Odyssey* to be ring-fenced, as with the adventures of Crusoe, the Homeric poem did not appear in penny dreadfuls in a similar fashion. While the presence of *Robinson Crusoe* in penny dreadfuls should not be overstated (it is a presence, rather than a regular fixture, most likely due to its wide availability as an independent publication), it is peculiar that the *Odyssey*, which is so resonant with Salmon's description of the penny dreadful (itself resonant with past Homeric associations of imagination and brutality), did not make any similar transition. Where men, women, boys, and girls were all reading Defoe, the social and political factors highlighted by the passage from Eliot would become intensified in the latter part of the nineteenth century, meaning that the *Odyssey* remained on the side of 'Euclid and Delectus' – becoming earmarked in particular for young upper and middle-class boys, for all that Eliot in her description of Tom clearly identifies its penny-dreadful appeal.

Boys' periodicals (which are explored in further detail later on) did not retell the *Odyssey* in detail, but use it referentially, with a strong assumption that its young readers either already have, or will, encounter the poem in full either at school or recreationally. By exploring Victorian literary engagements with the *Odyssey* for children, we can gauge a more precise picture of these signals and how they contributed to children's awareness of the status of classical literature at different points in childhood. The potential destructive power of the *Odyssey* as children's literature is partly mitigated by this signalling, but it also underlies the anxiety that publications for children should remain instructional, and restricted according to their audience. Just as Salmon and his fellow critics were nervous that children's literature could directly influence the future adulthoods of young people, this dynamic was also positively exploited: the adventure stories of the past could be moulded to introduce children to the modern world of adulthood. For Mathison 2008: 173, both childhood and adulthood

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<sup>85</sup> James, one of Jane Austen's family servants is said by Jane to have read it (LeFaye 1995: 95).

<sup>86</sup> Christopher Thomson, an apprentice ship-builder, wrote in his autobiography that he took a deep interest 'like most juveniles' in *Robinson Crusoe* and *Philip Quarll's Island*, as could be found in his school library (Thomson, 1847: 65). An anonymous female crossing sweeper interviewed by Henry Mayhew (1861: 480) said that she had read it.

<sup>87</sup> Howard Spring, the son of a gardener, was brought second-hand copies (Rose, 2001: 421).

<sup>88</sup> Samuel Bamford, a clerk, son of a muslin weaver and part-time teacher was fascinated by 'lone islands with savages and far-off countries teeming with riches and plenty' (Bamford, 1849: 94-5).

<sup>89</sup> Robert Blatchford, who would grow up to be an author (Waller 2006: 50).

were being increasingly commodified, creating an 'ideological continuity' between children's adventure stories and the business of adulthood: 'the commodification for adults of childhood as a site of wish-fulfilment, and the commodification of adulthood for children as a sanction to act upon such wishes later in life'. Bradley 2010: 128 notes the beneficial role of classical literature in this role: 'Classical texts could be considered 'safe ground' for exploring contemporary social and political issues, and the Roman Empire and its literature offered a set of evocative templates for articulating and appropriating Britain's own role as imperial superpower'. As readers' passion for exotic adventure stories developed significantly, the *Odyssey* began to be regarded positively in this light, thanks to the ability of the poem to have didactic purpose and contemporary recreational appeal. The poem's links to both institutional contexts, and entertainment meant that it could finally operate in both areas without parental concern, thanks to the focus on scandalizing modern literature like the penny dreadfuls, which provided negative contemporary paradigms. The violence and voyaging of the *Odyssey* was relevant enough to be exciting, but not too close for comfort because of the comforting space offered by the remoteness of the classical past.

Tom Tulliver's demand for an entertaining *Odyssey* in English would find its best-established answer in Lamb's *The Adventures of Ulysses*, which was reprinted seven times between 1808 and 1848,<sup>90</sup> despite critical disdain. There was then a hiatus in publication in the middle of the century, and for over three decades it did not appear that Lamb's work would rematerialize in further reprints: indeed, in this interim period, there were only three subsequent children's versions of the poem in English which were independent publications of the Odyssean narrative, and one of these was in translation from German.<sup>91</sup> For Tom, Lamb's *Odyssey* would have been the dominant example of the versions of the poem for children to which Philip referred: the desire for children's editions of the poem in English grew rapidly after 1870,<sup>92</sup> where it was first published in collected volumes of Lamb, and then again as a stand-alone work. By the end of the nineteenth-century, Lamb's work was hallowed as an incomparable adaptation of the

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<sup>90</sup> 1808, 1810, 1819, 1827, 1839, 1840, 1848.

<sup>91</sup> C.M. Bell (1881) *The Cruise of Ulysses and his men*; Charles Henry Hanson (1882) *Homer's Stories Simply Told*; Carl Witt (1886) *The Wanderings of Ulysses*, translated by F. Younghusband.

<sup>92</sup> Purnell, T. (ed.) (1870) *The complete correspondence and works, Charles Lamb*. Vol 4., E. Moxon & Co.: London.

*Odyssey* for children.<sup>93</sup> However, Lamb's work was by no means the only option, and the centrality of his work is affirmed by other texts. In order best to explore the transformation of the *Odyssey* for children, and specifically *The Adventures of Ulysses* as the catalyst for change, this chapter examines the reception of Lamb's work in stand-alone publications based directly on the Homeric poem, but also periodicals, which illustrate the paradigm of the *Odyssey* as aspirational, patriotic entertainment at work. Specifically, it outlines how Odysseus became a hero specifically suited for boys, and how developments in the allegorization of the poem converged with adventure stories to speak about the real world. Finally, it examines how educators (including classical scholars) reacted to Lamb's reorientation and ultimately embraced the adventure-*Odyssey* in the classroom.

i. Odysseus the role model

Key to the integration of Lamb was the critical acceptance of Odysseus as a paradigmatic figure for children. The transition in protagonist – which Lamb had steered away from Telemachus to his father – is not to be underestimated in its significance, as it has had a fundamental effect on the *Odyssey* for children to the present day, both in England and further afield.<sup>94</sup> As Kipf 2005: 101–3 has noted, the Telemachy is frequently either entirely removed or heavily edited from children's publications of today – and Lamb's focus on Odysseus had marginalized Telemachus, who only featured in the final few chapters set in Ithaca. Lamb's adventure-centric narrative had sanctioned a reading of the character of Odysseus that was edifying: the protagonist was to be admired for his ability to overcome the allegorical tests of character and endurance (as Lamb had interpreted them) provided by the adventure episodes of the poem. Compared with the complex, *polytropos* Odysseus, the relative lack of moral complexity concerning Telemachus would surely set a good example for young adolescents, who might encounter his transformation from boy to man, at first being powerless against the suitors but later undertaking his own adventures to Pylos and Sparta (*Od.* 3, 4) under the guidance of Mentor-Athena and taking an active role in their

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<sup>93</sup> It was republished individually in 1890, 1899, 1901, 1905, 1908, 1910, 1912, 1917, 1921, 1926, 1939, 1977, 1992.

<sup>94</sup> Kipf discusses both English and German children's texts, but as the final part of the thesis explores, there is also a trans-Atlantic legacy.

bloody dispatch with his father in *Od.* 23 (which after all, he did not instigate for lack of power, and was honouring filial duty). Yet the alignment of the young prince with the 'domesticity' and 'moral fibre' of the poem by late seventeenth-century critics, and the paradigmatic potential of Telemachus' development into manhood, was not seized upon by writers for young audiences in the 1800s.

Instead, young readers were to identify with Odysseus, rather than his son, Telemachus, moving from using the son as a parallel for their own experience of maturation, to using Odysseus as a model for their own future adulthood. The grounding for this model had been laid by Lamb in his preface, when he explained that the focus would switch to 'the father of Telemachus', and that the *Odyssey* pictures a 'brave man struggling with adversity', who is 'wise' and subject to 'the severest trials to which human life can be exposed'. The allegorical adventures are those things that 'a wise fortitude must expect to encounter in its course through this world'. Though fictional stories were the most appealing, children's literature of the nineteenth-century was evocative of a recognisable real world, to which young readers were directly encouraged to relate: for example, Thomas Hughes' *Tom Brown's Schooldays*,<sup>95</sup> discussed by Holt 2008: 78, was a model of reading replicated much more widely, with young readers expected to be: 'firstly, learning about school life vicariously through a book, and then learning about the outside world through various school activities which involve enacting situations at school that harmlessly mirror much graver scenarios played out in the wider world'. The idea of reading for leisure as preparation for the future of not just the individual but the nation was another way of ensuring didactic value in children's reading, and became particularly apparent during the latter half of the nineteenth-century due to the British imperial cause. A Homeric voyage remained a mirror for real life (as Fénelon had originated for children over a century ago, in a similarly international context), as did the specific invitation posed by Lamb to read individual episodes of Odysseus' adventures as allegory (as Bell continued, and reframed). However, in its latest configurations, the *Odyssey* for children continued to train young readers (especially boys) spiritually, but also more literally about the merits of travel and adventure than ever before.

The reasons why this model was more relevant to the nineteenth century than the parallel becomes apparent over the course of this section of the thesis, as we explore

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<sup>95</sup> Similarly to *The Mill on the Floss*, written in 1857, but set in the 1830s.



how Odysseus better represented both the political and social ideals and popular exploits of contemporary children's fiction. As the century developed, children were invited to read Odysseus as an aspirational hero: one whose fearlessness on a long voyage was supposed to speak to contemporary children about their future lives, morally and pragmatically. Odysseus' adventures became the framework in which definitive positive judgements about the innate character of the protagonist could be made – instead of being used as the evidence of his moral weaknesses. The topicality of the adventure theme and the centrality of Odysseus in the narrative would provide the basic building blocks for young boys to identify with him in terms of Odysseus' status and individual qualities, which mirrored desirable characteristics of the era. The aspirational masculine figure of this era manifested itself in a twofold manner: Norman Vance (1985: 10) summarizes Victorian 'manliness', as 'physical manliness, ideas of chivalry and gentlemanliness, and moral manliness, all of which tend to incorporate something of the patriotic and military qualities which 'manliness' may also connote'. All of these qualities can be read, if sought after, in Odysseus' adventures.

The *Odyssey* recounts tales of Odysseus both from the poem's past and present, which emphasise all-roundedness in Odysseus' physical and social abilities. Though not famed for his combat in the *Iliad* (but rather for the more underhand tactic of night raids in the Doloneia of *Iliad* 10, which was conceived by Sch. T ad *Il.* 10.1 to be a later insertion because of its uncharacteristic content) and mocked by Irus for his apparent physical weakness when disguised (see Rosen 2007: 136), the *Odyssey* provides several opportunities for the physical capabilities of Odysseus to be displayed: in the latter example, once Odysseus removes his disguise Irus cowers, having seen 'what limbs the old man's rags have uncovered' (*Od.* 18.74), and Odysseus, so as not to draw attention to himself, 'hit him lightly' (18.94) albeit with a blow that 'shattered the bones' (18.97) underneath Irus' ear. During the games on Phaeacia in *Od.* 8.109–233, Laodamas recognises the weary traveller is stronger than he appears to be:

'...in his build he is no mean man,  
for the lower legs and thighs he has, and both arms above them,  
for the massive neck and great strength, nor is it that he lacks  
youth...' (*Od.* 8.134–7)

Not only does his throw of the discus surpass the other competitors ('Not one of the Phaeacians will come up to this mark or pass it' Athena tells the crowd in 8.198), but Odysseus himself provides a testament to his physical superiority:

'There was Philoctetes alone who surpassed me in archery  
When we Achaeans shot with bows in the Trojan country.  
But I will say that I stand far out ahead of all others  
Such as are living mortals now and feed on the earth...  
...I can  
throw with the spear as far as another casts with an arrow.  
Only in a foot race I fear one of the Phaeacians  
might outpass me...' (*Od.* 8.219–222, 228–31)

Outside of direct contest too, his ability to apply his strength and skill for practical ends are also considered: the scar on Odysseus' leg from the boar which he killed in his youth (*Od.* 19.446–54) is a permanent reminder of an animal which he was nearly bested by, but ultimately killed, and the mark left is essential to revealing his identity to Eurycleia, another step towards his reinstatement in the house. The crafting of his raft (he cuts down twenty trees in *Od.* 5.244) and his own bed (*Od.* 23.190–201) underlie a picture of a man who is able to direct his physicality in a productive fashion.

The hero's military prowess – a mixture of physical and moral qualities – is demonstrated both through recapitulation of events at Troy, by Helen (*Od.* 4.239–58: 'after striking many Trojans down with the thin bronze, edge, he went back to the Argives and brought back much information'), Menelaus (*Od.* 4.266–89), and Demodocus (*Od.* 8.72–82, *Od.* 8.499–520) and in his defeat of the suitors – creating a plan suited to his limited company of men, and then being physically capable of dispatching them in an efficient manner ('every time he hit his man' *Od.* 22.117–8). By physically defeating the suitors with only his son (thus setting an example) and his most loyal servants (reflecting his qualities as a man deserving of loyalty but also as a master and ruler), both central aspects of 'manliness' as defined by Vance (physical and moral) are demonstrated. The resourcefulness required of military life is reflected not only in the recapitulation of Odysseus' Trojan exploits, but also the quick-thinking of any one of Odysseus' persuasive strategies, e.g. the Cretan tale to Eumaeus in *Od.* 14. 192–359 or the tale told to Penelope in *Od.* 19.220–48, 262–307, where he feigns an encounter with himself, before warning of his imminent return. Chivalry and gentlemanliness could also be found, if actively sought: Odysseus' behaviour in the direct interactions with named

women is considered. Indeed, he relies on persuading others of his 'gentlemanly behaviour' in his encounter with Nausicaa in *Od.* 6.221, where he covers his genitals (6.128–9) before later bathing away from the princess and her maids:

'I will not bathe in front of you, for I feel embarrassed  
in the presence of lovely-haired young girls to appear all naked.'  
(*Od.* 6.221–222)

As de Jong 2001: 163 notes, this is not a sign of Odysseus' own prudery, but an attempt to soothe the concerns of the Phaeacian girls, and reassure them of his honourable intentions. Further 'chivalry' could be demonstrably read in his careful rejection of Calypso:

'I myself know  
that all you say is true and that circumspect Penelope  
can never match the impression you make for beauty and stature.  
She is mortal after all, and you are immortal and ageless.'  
(*Od.* 5.215–8)

Odysseus' particular sensitivity to Calypso's emotions in spite of her divine status, even his desire to return to Penelope, could well be read anachronistically as a particular respect for the institution of marriage (despite his affairs with her and indeed Circe). Yet even in the poem which, as Strauss Clay 1997: 38 argues, displays the strongest bias in antiquity towards Odysseus on the part of the poet, any suggestion of his 'moral manliness' is much more questionable. As Odysseus took centre stage in children's versions in light of the new model of manhood, one result was that children's authors began to amplify the permissiveness of Odysseus' more problematic actions. Whereas before, Godwin had been tempted simply to omit problematic parts of the narrative, a later generation of children's authors would actively seek to remould Odysseus, driven by the new way in which the *Odyssey* resonated with real life. His reintroduction as the protagonist in children's versions and his self-narrated adventures were made less morally contentious as a result, especially in Christianized retellings of the story, which tended to characterize events in explicitly black or white terms. In light of the familiar contemporary model of masculinity, with its combination of physical, moral and personal qualities, Odysseus would appear an ultimately reassuring character.

ii. A muscular, Christian Odysseus.

One work written after the revival of Lamb's *The Adventures of Ulysses* helps to demonstrate how even texts with conservative tendencies owed a debt to their Romantic predecessor. *The Cruise of Ulysses and his Men: or, Tales and Adventures from the Odyssey for Boys and Girls*, written by a C.M. Bell,<sup>96</sup> was published in 1881 – just before an apparent resurgence of the publication of *The Adventures of Ulysses* in 1885. It appears to be the first of a new generation of versions of the *Odyssey* at the end of the nineteenth century, and not only is it roughly contemporary with the revival of Lamb's work, but it can provide an insight into how approaches to the poem made by Lamb continued to be framed in the latter part of the century. Significantly, it is also the earliest identifiable children's version of the *Odyssey* that stakes a claim to be written by a woman (though this proves extremely difficult to independently certify) – and as the rest of the Appendix shows, this marks the start of a growing female presence, both in terms of voice and of authorship, into the twentieth century. Covering Books 8–12 of the *Odyssey*, Bell's work is even more selective than Lamb in its sole focus on Odysseus' adventures. The strongest hint of a Romantic influence on Bell becomes apparent when Circe gives Odysseus' companions a drug called 'Death-in-life' (1881: 66; 73) which recalls 'Life-in-Death', the deathly pale woman who gambles for the soul of the protagonist in the final version of Coleridge's 1798 poem *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner* (1834: 9). Odysseus' men also recount their experiences, as the mariner does: 'Then each told what he had suffered while he had lived through Death-in-Life. Even Circe herself could not restrain her tears as she listened' (1881: 79). Yet of course, in the *Odyssey*, the companions – like the mariner's shipmates – will die, and it will be Odysseus who survives to tell his tale. The reference to Coleridge's poem suggests an openness to Romantic approaches to literature, and when the structure of the narrative and focus on the experience of an individual is coupled with openness to intertextuality, Lamb's *The Adventures of Ulysses* becomes more apparent as a hypotext to Bell's work. The main purpose of Bell's work is to develop Lamb's work to moral and religious ends

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<sup>96</sup> It has proven impossible to find out any further details about the author: Charlotte Yonge tells us that she was a 'Mrs', but whether this was verified, or assumed, and if 'her' initials were her own or those of her husband is unknown. The degree of obscurity as to the author's identity might suggest some very deliberate ambiguity, suggesting a female author who would prefer discretion, especially given the author/narrator character of 'Mater'.

– which meant that both Odysseus, and the act of reading the *Odyssey* as a child became paradigmatic.

Bell's work was well-thought of enough to be recommended by Charlotte Yonge 1887: 69 in her guide to suitable reading for children called *What Books to Lend and What to Give*, though it appears to be Bell's only publication, did not appear to be reprinted, and details concerning the author appear to be untraceable. In her introduction, Bell presents the character of a mother, simply known as 'Mater' – a maternal pseudonym that the Oxford English Dictionary (2015) relates was 'associated chiefly with British public schools' during the nineteenth century. As such, the question of the intended readership is raised. The author's lack of prominence and the invocation of 'Mater' as a persona of the author suggests that the author was writing from the upper social echelons, and the public school context becomes apparent at the very end of the book, where Mater's audience depart ('...she counted the days till the next vacation should bring the dear brood home again' 1881: 128) – this is the long-term absence of children at boarding schools. Arguably, these occasional and relatively easily understood references (it would not be so difficult to derive the meaning of Mater from the context, even without Latin) would not have precluded middle or lower class readers, and the story is drawn with the broad strokes that are necessary for the mass-market. Yet the full understanding of this idealised and aspirational setting would be most relevant to the public-school boy who was one of the children the story featured. The frame story, even if predominantly preoccupied with instilling Christian values, does not stop shy of reflecting the expected class and status of young readers of Odyssean tales.

Bell further establishes her readership according to the demands of the market – by age grouping, which had become increasingly specific since the beginning of the century, and by gender. Mater reads her story to her children – three boys and one girl, presented in pairs of a similar age (two elder and two younger). Before she begins, Mater instructs her children as follows:

'You two "little folks," Willie and Harold, may go to sleep till the Introduction is over, if you lie, said the Mater; 'for you may listen to these Greek stories just as you would to fairy tales. But you Herbert and Effie, must try to use your minds in some degree, as you listen.'  
(1881: 10)

This book is clearly aimed at both sexes then, but the particular masculine relevance is demarcated with great clarity. Bell recognises the shift from didacticism-as-entertainment to entertainment-as-didacticism when she jovially assumes the reaction of her reader (via the young fictional listeners) to the Introduction (9–10): ‘An Introduction is as bad as a Preface, and nobody reads a Preface’. She tells her fictional listeners that they can leave the room if they like, but they will not understand the story in the way that she wishes them to read it. The author appeals to a generation who are inclined, even accustomed to, going straight to the story and ignoring didactic attempts by the author. These children are now reading independently more than ever, and Bell has to resort to using some gentle trickery in order to tempt both her fictional and real audience into reading on rather than skipping ahead. This is particularly important for the multi-aged audience (both fictional and non-fictional), who according to Bell, require differing levels of engagement with the Homeric poem, further demarcating the increasing separation of audiences.

As with previous generations, the expectations of younger readers are less demanding than of older counterparts. Bell directly invites a blurring between the adventures of the *Odyssey* and fairy tales – a more explicit equivocation of the two types of literature that had been linked by the common reading of Godwin and Lamb. Bell invites her older readers to read a deeper significance in the tales of adventure she is about to tell: she sees worth in the *Odyssey*, not only as an acceptable form of entertainment for young readers as it is (recalling Lamb’s advocacy of recreational reading being acceptable in its own right) but for older readers, as a tool to reflect specifically on the Bible, which becomes the key to interpreting it in the way ‘Mater’ sees fit. Indeed, the valuable parts of the Homeric poem are not to be attributed to an ancient poet, but to God:

‘But do not, as you listen to the story of Ulysses, thank God, in the spirit of the Pharisees, that you are not as these half-taught Greeks. Rather think how much and how bravely they endured to win the “corruptible crown” of earthly fame and honour. Think how “much more will be required of you, to whom so much more is given”. And be quite sure that whatever in the deeds of Ulysses or the thoughts of Homer was “lovely and of good report,” or noble or brave, is worthy of our admiration and respect; for it had its source, not from the Spirit of Evil, but in Him “from Whom cometh every good and perfect gift” to His creatures. If you listen to these stories in this spirit, they will have

a double interest to you elder ones. May the thoughts of the hopelessness of those brave old Greeks when calamity fell on them, or when those whom they loved passed into the Land of Shadows, fill your hearts with thankfulness to our Lord Christ, who came into the gross darkness of the heathen world, "to bring life and immortality to light, through the Gospel," by His own perfect life, and to unfold the "mystery" which "was not made known unto the sons of men" in those "other ages" in which old Homer and his heroes lived.' (1881: 12-3)

The Homeric poem and the Bible were increasingly enjoined in nineteenth-century circles, as scholars and critics drew literary, historical, and linguistic comparisons between the two works – facilitated significantly by scholarship on the Homeric question (Turner 1981: 140-2). This connection of texts appeared ripe to spill over into recreational reading, as illustrated earlier in the passage from Eliot, where Tom's anticipated enjoyment of the *Odyssey* is predicated on his enjoyment of the feats of skill and strength of Biblical figures. Yet Bell does not seek to blur the boundaries between the two: instead, the Bible is supposed to steer and dominate the interpretation of the Homeric poem for didactic purposes. For nineteenth-century children, the Bible was the most widespread form of literary encounter, forming the basis for literacy in the most basic forms of education (Digby and Searby 1981: 33-4) – meaning that the author could expect a wide audience to understand her direction to 'listen to these stories in this spirit'. The admiration of Lamb's generation for the misadventurer was transformed into an admiration for Ulysses, who achieved deeds 'of good report' and was 'brave' *despite* his own misadventure – his ignorance of the Christian God, who had allowed him to demonstrate virtuous qualities despite his pagan beliefs. Ulysses' misadventures are once again reiterated as the difficult life choices of the Christian life-path, made more treacherous by his religious ignorance. Bell tells her child readers that the difficulties of their own life should be made easier by their exposure to the Christian faith.

Lamb too, had outlined the adventures of the *Odyssey* as charting the trials and adversities of life, but Bell's Christian allegorization of the *Odyssey* for children was much more explicit than Lamb's broadly humanistic approach. In aligning the *Odyssey* with the Bible, Bell is not simply expressing personal faith, but actively reclaiming the poem in a Christian light for children, in a convergence of didactic and recreational allegorical modes of reading. Rather than simply reiterating the allegorical interpretations of Odysseus' adventures as outlined in antiquity, Bell was using allegory

as a means of distancing the past and excusing men of 'other ages' for their lack of exposure to Christian teachings. The fantastical elements of the *Odyssey* were a key tool in this regard: they provided, in the case of Bell, a safe, and unreal, distance from the remote 'heathen' past, enabling a propitious reading of the poem. The improbability of Odysseus' adventures meant that allegorical messages were received more loudly than ever before – but allegory also brought the *Odyssey* closer to literature previously regarded as antagonistic to classical literature, and specifically, Lamb's *The Adventures of Ulysses*. Avery 1965: 48 explores how a similar model of fairy tale as didactic allegory was popular roughly in the same period: Charles Kingsley's *The Water Babies* (1863) and Christina Rossetti's *Speaking Likenesses* (1874) are two of the most noted examples this type. This model had its early origins in the morality tales of Sarah Trimmer and Hannah More, who Lamb had railed against, but this modern generation of authors in the didactic fairy tale tradition were also resorting to allegory to pacify critics. Avery 1965: 63 argues that the 'best defence' of the less salubrious aspects of fairy tales was that Christian authors could write their own original takes on such stories, and the necessary basis of such allegory is a topic familiar to children, which was often religion (Avery 1965: 57). The *Odyssey*, adventure, and fairy tales were becoming more closely aligned than ever before.

*The Cruise of Ulysses and his Men* is the *only* text in the corpus of children's versions of the poem to begin with Book 8 of the poem – specifically the Phaeacian games. Bell's introduction to Odysseus was not a far deviation from Lamb's starting point of Book 9: the focus is still on the travels of Odysseus, but by incorporating Book 8, the reader is given contextual reassurance as to the kind of hero that Odysseus will prove to be. More specifically, Bell's model is strongly reminiscent of one particular model of masculinity: 'muscular Christianity', a term which came to be associated most prominently with Charles Kingsley,<sup>97</sup> who was a trained classicist (he read his degree at Cambridge), clergyman and an adaptor of Greek mythology for children amongst his

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<sup>97</sup> Kingsley was another author who was influenced by tales of adventure and Greek mythology; most famous as the author of *The Water Babies* and the sea adventure of 1855, *Westward, Ho!*, he was also the author of a 1856 book called *The Heroes, or Greek Fairy Tales for My Children*, which focused on the myths of Perseus, Jason and Theseus. Whilst it would be over-simplistic to call any of these myths morally linear, they can be told in a way that circumvents the moral issues without, as Lamb put it, 'enervating the Book'. The *Odyssey* as a whole, with its mass-slaughter of the suitors in particular, cannot, which may well have been a factor in Kingsley's decision not to adapt the *Odyssey*, not to mention the nature of Odysseus' character that would not unambiguously fit the title of *The Heroes*.



many literary pursuits.<sup>98</sup> Donald Hall (1994: 6) defines this notion as ‘an association between physical strength, religious certainty, and the ability to shape and control the world around oneself’. It was an ethos embedded in the athletic competitions of the public school stories – rugby, cricket, football, Eton fives, rowing and other team sports (see Mangan 2000: 38–41) – an ‘integral parts of a gentleman’s education’, according to Kingsley, who argued:

‘... in the playing-field boys acquire virtues which no books can give them; not merely daring and endurance, but, better still, temper, self-restraint, fairness, honour, unenvious approbation of another’s success, and all that “give and take” of life which stand a man in good stead when he goes forth into the world, and without which, indeed, his success is always maimed and partial.’ (1874: 86)

Kingsley’s statement forms part of an essay called ‘Nausicaa of London, or, The Lower Education of Woman’, in a volume called *Health and Education* (1874), which advocated for girls to also be encouraged to take appropriate exercise and personal care, using the model of Nausicaa’s washing and playing ball on the beach (*Od.* 6. 85–101) to decry the present conditions of women. For boys, however, this message was not integrated only into public school life, but beyond: as Huggins 2006: 24–5 argues, whilst there may have been social stratification between groups who played together, the team sports were rife amongst church organisations (such as the YMCA, founded in 1844) and mechanics’ institutes, and such organisations were set up in London slums. The message that physicality, masculinity and moral uprightness were mutually supportive pillars of Christianity was well established across a broad cross-section of society. Whilst Kingsley may claim that physical exercise can teach certain virtues better than any book, Bell’s version of the *Odyssey* was precisely occupied with outlining these virtues, and the moral and social superiority associated with muscular Christianity: whilst Kingsley used Nausicaa as his paradigm, Bell would attempt to transform Odysseus into a similar beacon of Victorian religious manhood, with the positive qualities outlined by Kingsley apparently in mind.

When Bell starts to tell the story of the competitive games, she begins:

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<sup>98</sup> For further information on ‘muscular Christianity’ see D. Hall 1994. For biography of Charles Kingsley’s education see Chadwick 1975.

'No light-blue of Cambridge, nor dark-blue of Oxford, ever pulled oars against each other, as those young Greeks in the far-off ages ran the race, or aimed the bow, or threw the massive quoit. For, in those days, strength of limb and skill of hand were accounted amongst the highest gifts the gods could bestow. And to have the mysterious stranger a witness of his skill, that he might carry the report of it to far-off lands, was an honour which each young Phaeacian noble eagerly hoped for.' (1881: 17)

Bell's Greeks are superior physically to the most able athletes from Oxbridge – the system to which those in the 'muscular Christian' stories and the public-school system aspired. The pride of Bell's ancient Greek men in their physical strength is not reprehensible in itself, but Bell uses the coerced confrontation of Odysseus to make her point, that the physicality displayed by Euryalus is nothing without mental and moral qualities – especially the temper and self-restraint outlined by Kingsley:

'And so, pert youth,' he replied, 'you think the only gifts of heaven are such as you yourself are endowed with — a strong body, with an empty mind!' (1880:18)

These lines are a reworking of *Od.* 8.174–7:

'Another again in his appearance is like the immortals,  
But upon his words there is no grace distilled, as in your case  
The appearance is conspicuous, and not a god even  
would make it otherwise, and yet the mind there is worthless.'

This appears to be sentimentally the same, but emphasis given by Bell throughout the episode inflates certain aspects. When the still-disguised Odysseus reveals his own physical strength by throwing an enormous rock (which is illustrated on the opposite page) rather than the larger discus of *Od.* 8.186–8, he emphasises his superiority beyond what is described in the *Odyssey*. The image is partly Iliadic, as for example Diomedes lifts rocks that no ordinary man could lift (*Il.* 5.302), and the superhuman image of the Trojan War adds a robust dimension to a character typified by his ingenuity. However, Odysseus' superiority of physique is also a reflection of his superior character. In the Homeric poem, Odysseus' verbal defeat of the rude Euryalus plays several roles – a repost, a warning ('you have stirred up anger deep in the breast within me' 8.178), a role in a broader theme of the deceptive appearances (as argued by

de Jong 2001: 203), and through the quality of his oratory, a hint to the Phaeacians that they are entertaining a very special guest. In Bell, however, the athletic context, invocation of the Oxford and Cambridge Boat Race, and physical characterisation counterbalanced with moral certainty means that Odysseus becomes a hero in the muscular Christian tradition. This is certified by his 'religious certainty': Odysseus is also implied to have a superior knowledge of the 'gifts of heaven' (he is able to consciously define what the gods consider to be their blessings, unlike Euryalos). The sources of such blessings are no longer due to 'a god' or 'the immortals', but instead to 'heaven' and its specifically Christian associations. His moral high ground gives him the balance of power in the situation, which Bell's Alcinous resolves by telling Euryalos: "And see that your gift, O rash Euryalos,' he said, 'excels them all!" (1880: 22), an emphasis more explicit than the Homeric poem, which instead relates:

"Then let each of you who are such contribute a well-washed robe, and a tunic, and a talent of precious gold. Then we shall assemble it together... But Euryalos shall make amends to him with a spoken word and a gift, for having spoken out of due measure.' (Od. 8.392-4, 396-7)

Even if the *Odyssey* implies that Euryalos' gift is an additional, or special gift, the wrongdoing by Euryalos, and the measures needed to make amends (both physical and implied gestures), are marked out acutely by Bell. As in the *Odyssey*, when the contest takes place, Odysseus is still disguised, both to the Phaeacians and to Bell's readers, who only know him as 'the stranger'. The admonishment of Euryalos, and vindication of the stranger by Alcinous, means that Odysseus is already established as a morally upright character before he is fully introduced in the narrative, and begins to narrate his own adventures.

From the outset, Odysseus continues to be drawn as morally upright through Bell's portrayal of the gods. Rather than commencing with the full self-introduction of Odysseus in *Od. 9*, which Lamb had followed relatively faithfully, Bell's narrative begins with a more dramatically hostile introduction:

'You must know, O King (began Ulysses), that from the moment I left the walls of Troy, victorious, the gods have been against me. At the very outset of my homeward voyage, great Neptune sent a storm upon

me, by which my little fleet were driven hither and thither by unfriendly winds, quite out of our course, till at last we drifted to the strange island of the Lotus-Eaters.' (1881: 25-6)

Bell goes straight to the location of the first adventure episode, but not before emphasising the hostility of the (pagan) gods, and the apparent powerlessness of Odysseus and his men in unfamiliar territory. The characterisation of the gods is key to allowing Odysseus to demonstrate both the piety and ability to control the world around oneself, which are the other key aspects of muscular Christianity. Neptune is portrayed as malicious and somewhat sadistic: before Ulysses enters Polyphemus cave, he: 'lay coiled underneath the smooth depths, and laughed to himself as we neared the dark coast' (1881: 29). Rather than the punishments inflicted by Neptune being justifiable, they are seen to be malicious. Zeus (or Jove, as Bell calls him) and Athena (or Pallas Minerva) are singled out from the rest of the Greek pantheon by Bell as proto-Christian figures. Ulysses' biggest divine advocate in the Homeric poem, Athena, is for Bell:

'...among the best and purest of the "many inventions" whom the old Greeks sought out and worshipped as gods – like the Virgin Mary, or the Patron Saint in the popular Roman Catholic legends of later days.' (1881: 11)

The reductive comparison of pagan figures to Roman Catholic legends hints that Bell is advocating a Protestant theology. To characterise the divinities who are (respectively) the most authoritative and most amenable to the protagonist as playing similar roles to the Christian God and most venerated saint, a division is opened up between Jove and Pallas Minerva, and the rest of the pantheon. Athena is 'kind to her favourites, and wise, and powerful' (1881: 11) but she is fallible, as she is 'not All-wise or All-powerful...she is almost as liable to be tricked and circumvented by the other gods, as Ulysses himself'. Athena is partial to Odysseus, and treated favourably for this, but her position in a polytheistic pantheon is still flawed for a monotheistic author. Bell goes on to outline how the ancient poet has his hero describe: 'a Great God, who is above all the other gods, who cares for the poor, the stranger, the friendless – to avenge their cause, as a "just Judge over all the earth"' (a reference to *Psalms* 94). If Zeus is to be paralleled with the Christian God, then Bell cannot undermine him: the complex theology of the Greek pantheon and their interactions with humans is not just nominally Latinized but morally transformed. If the young audience are to relate to a universe which they have

already been informed predates their Christian one, then it is apparently necessary for Jove to appear to be overtly impartial (if not implicitly in favour of the protagonist).

The only direct appearance of Jove, where he speaks, is following the complaint of Helios (referred to simply as 'the sun god' by Bell). The sun god's threat is not only a pragmatic (as in *Od.* 12.377–83), but also a theological concern:

'But hearken well, O Father Jove, and all ye other gods! If vengeance tarry, then I will no longer light either the earth or the heavens! There shall be warm summer days and fruitful seasons no more; nor shall any man see the face of his fellow, nor shall even the gods behold one another, but there shall be night on the earth, and night also in heaven. And as for me, I will go down to King Pluto, and I will shine among the dead men, and the shadowy nations shall rejoice in my light.'  
(1881: 114–5)

The threat of the sun god not only relates to the natural world and human life, but inverts the divine order, and adds an additional potency – heaven itself becoming devoid of the light which so often symbolizes Christianity, instead bringing to 'life and immortality' the 'gross darkness' (as Bell refers to the 'heathen world' in the Introduction) of the pagan afterlife. Jove then makes his only speech in Bell's work:

'Then up rose great Jove, and he sware [sic] by the oath that binds the gods and men, that the sun-god should have vengeance, if only he would still shine among the immortals, and brighten the fair green earth. 'I will send the swift bright thunderbolt,' said he, 'and it shall cleave their ship in two, so soon as they are out in the dark mid-seas.'  
(1881: 115)

Jove's only words are those reflecting a greater concern for the planet, but also as a sole arbiter of justice. All of this allows Bell's Ulysses to demonstrate a particular kind of piety when he prays to Jove throughout Bell's work. He is in the only god to whom the protagonist prays – if Jove is a God-like figure, then Ulysses is an agent of God: the repurposing of the king of the gods in a Christian light is found in Neo-Latin epic, such as Petrarch's *Africa*, or Milton's *Paradise Lost* – suggesting another intertextual layer in addition to the reference to Coleridge, and borrowing the authority of these literary tactics. When Ulysses faces Scylla, his men freeze from fear and the ship begins to drift towards the rocks; Ulysses buoys his men by telling them:

“Have you forgotten all the dangers past, through which Ulysses was your guide? The same Ulysses urges you onward now. Let each man do his duty. To your oars! Then trust great Jove and me.’ But my words were braver than my heart. Nevertheless my crew rowed the vessel onwards through the smoking seas.’ (1881: 105)

Similarly, Odysseus informs his companions to sail past Trinacria:

“Be ruled by me. Steer past those sunny coasts, and trust to Jove and me!”(1881: 108)

Even though he acquiesces to the men’s request, this invocation of ‘Jove and me’ validates Ulysses’ leadership through this association between Jove and the Christian God, and these successive invocations of Jove and Ulysses together. Both quotations stem from the refusal of Ulysses’ men to follow his instructions, and their personal weaknesses rather than faulty leadership that lead to their demise. Eurylochus is the leader of the dissenting voices, ‘always the foremost to rebel’ (1881: 111): he breaks out in a ‘scornful laugh’ (1881: 109) when Ulysses tells his men to steer past Trinacria: ‘Much cause have we to trust *thee*, cruel one!’ (1881: 109). The lack of faith of Eurylochus is supposed to detract from the personal responsibility of Ulysses, and he also serves as a negative counterpart to Ulysses: reporting back after scouting out Circe’s island, Eurylochus ‘fell weeping’ (1881: 72) at Ulysses’ knees. Whilst there is no direct condemnation of this behaviour, the courage and resourcefulness of Ulysses is thrown into contrast. Eurylochus invokes the memories of Laestrygonia and the Cyclops, where the crew ‘perished for the leader’s rashness’ (1881: 72) begging him not to go, the reader is not supposed to give him credibility as an admirable person for this self-preservation, even if he speaks rationally. Ulysses’s response only serves to highlight his own bravery:

‘But I answered ‘Stay here and feast, Eurylochus. Desert thy leader and thy friends. I only will fare forth, unfriended, to this deadly quest, if deadly it must prove. Coward and traitor, farewell!’  
So I stalked forth with giant strides, while Eurylochus ashamed, yet still unmanned with terror, sat gloomily watching me from under the vessel’s prow.’ (1881: 72)

The 'unmanned' status of Eurylochus at this moment is key: this one word undermines any good reasoning in his arguments to stay put. He acts as a counter to Ulysses, who is a negative of all of Eurylochus' qualities – brave, loyal and specifically *manly*. In the same passage, in deciding to set out to Circe's home, he is consciously choosing to manifest his own his own destiny, to actively control the world around him (a sentiment reflected in the peculiar language of the second invocation of Jove: 'Be ruled by me'): he is a muscular Christian. Though Bell goes to great length to emphasise the powerlessness of Ulysses in the face of divine hostility, like Lamb's Ulysses, we are to admire him for having endured such struggles. However Bell goes to much greater lengths to show her audience that Ulysses has personal, and specifically, prized masculine, qualities.

Bell's Ulysses is not uniformly whitewashed – which is why she stresses eagerly at the beginning and end to take 'what was good and noble' (1881: 128) in his deeds. By being asked to focus on the 'lovely and of good report' in the bravery demonstrated by Odysseus and his men, in a world full of 'gross darkness', readers are directed to read their actions favourably in spite of their faults. This encouragement of a conscious overlooking of aspects of the poem is aided by the fact that Bell's book only covers a very limited portion of the poem: Books 8–12, which does not cover the slaughter of the suitors (though the afterword suggests that a second volume which covered Odysseus' return to Ithaca would be equally partial).<sup>99</sup> Unsurprisingly, Odysseus' adultery and slaughter are not made explicit in Bell's work. Whilst the preface acknowledges that there might be aspects which are not so 'lovely' — after all, such direction would not be required if it were uniformly edifying — these can be at least partly exonerated because of the ignorance of Christianity 'in those "other ages" in which old Homer and his heroes lived'. Despite this, Bell advises the readers not to dissociate themselves from the 'half-taught Greeks' (as focalized by her implied reader), who had produced a work worth 'admiration and respect': this preface, which appears to be circumspect with regards to the *Odyssey*, presents the poem as valuable, in spite of itself.

For all Bell's attempts to direct young readers to morally edifying parts of the poem, it was not a success critically:

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<sup>99</sup> 'I may perhaps be able to tell you more...how Ulysses and Telemachus fought a brave fight against the wicked men who had spoiled his home, and slew them all single-handed, purging the courts of Ithaca of luxury and idleness, of crime and wrong' (1881: 127). This appears very Fénelonian, but these themes are not attacked in a repetitive or explicit way in *The Cruise of Ulysses and His Men*.

‘The most romantic part of the *Odyssey* is certainly the story which Ulysses tells at the Court of Alcinoüs. It offers a fascinating subject to modern adapters, whose chief difficulty seems to be in letting it alone, and not loading it with ornamentation, prettinesses, and sentimentalities of their own devising...If Mrs. Bell could have been content to give us Homer, we should have been much better pleased.’ (‘Current Literature’ *The Spectator*, 20 August, 1881: 21)

In exploring *The Cruise of Ulysses and his Men*, it becomes apparent that Lamb’s treatment of the *Odyssey* had become so acceptable in its own right, that any attempt to moralise it retrospectively proved to be a critical and commercial failure. Although the reviewer appreciated the value in the focus on the adventures of Odysseus, the increased heavy-handedness with which the Christian allegory was pursued by Bell was no better received than it had been over seventy years previously. The ‘sentimentalities’ of Bell’s ‘own devising’ had been voiced too strongly, and interfered too far in the romance of the poem, and its Romantic legacy. Lamb, who had faced vicious criticism concerning his perceived coarseness and vulgarity had won over the critics: indeed, now complaints were raised in Bell’s version that the imagery of Odysseus waiting for Charybdis to throw up timbers to use as a raft (*Od.* 12.438–441) has been ‘watered down’ (1881: 21). The attempt to produce an edifying version had prettified the Homeric poem, which Lamb had delighted in for its brutal and sensational nature. The sheltering of the young reader by Bell also meant that she had lost grounding in reality, which was so central to contemporary children’s fiction. The reviewer complains about the lack of detail, for example, that her periphrasis of the death of Elpenor did not give his reasoning for going up onto the roof (‘Why is the realism of all this description taken away? It would be the very thing for children to appreciate’). As a result, the potential sequel hinted at in the epilogue, never came to fruition, and *The Cruise of Ulysses* was not republished. Such comments indicate a sea change in Lamb’s favour: the perceived need ‘to give us Homer’ has, in the reviewer’s eyes, been obstructed by Bell’s didacticism, and didactic use of allegory. The *Odyssey* is not a constant, but here it is considered as such: in reality, the reviewer associates the poem not with the manners of Pope, or the overt didactic tones of Fénelon, but with the romance and vivacious imagery of Lamb. The approach to the *Odyssey* typified by Lamb has become equated



with the *Odyssey* itself, and the emphasis is explicitly on books 9–12, Odysseus' fantastic adventures.

iii. Adventures in the real world: The '*Boy's Own*' *Odyssey*

The penultimate quality of Victorian masculinity, as outlined by Vance – patriotism – is another key factor in Odysseus' moral rehabilitation in this period. As a theme, it is most ably read in Odysseus' yearning for his homeland, which he longs for despite its relative simplicity:

'... my island lies low and away, last of all on the water  
toward the dark, with the rest below facing east and sunshine,  
a rugged place, but a good nurse of men; for my part  
I cannot think of any place sweeter on earth to look at...  
....So it is  
that nothing is more sweet in the end than country and parents  
ever, even when far away one lives in a fertile  
place, when it is in alien country, far from his parents.'  
(*Od.* 9.25–28; 33–36)

Just as it is the primary motivation of the protagonist, young Victorian boys were also expected to be conscious of their relationship to the homeland, especially during their absence from it. The adventures of the *Odyssey* are defined by their literal and narrative separation from Odysseus' home in Ithaca, and the sites within these travels defined by not being 'home'. They offer encounters largely devoid of the conventional customs of Homeric living (either because the native inhabitants do not honour the customs of foreigners, or because of their divine nature), where the protagonist is forced to respond to unfamiliar territory. The commonalities of nineteenth-century imperial juvenile literature and the *Odyssey* were fully exploited by authors adapting the poem for a young audience, yet the usage of the poem for young boys in this era makes it clear that imperial aspiration did not have to be explicit to be effective.

As nineteenth-century adventure fiction for children developed, *Robinson Crusoe* continued to play a significant role. For the novelist George Borrow, writing in 1851, it was: 'a book from which the most luxuriant and fertile of our modern prose writers have drunk inspiration; a book, moreover, to which from the hardy deeds which it narrates, and the spirit of strange and romantic enterprise which it tends to awaken,

England owes many of her astonishing discoveries both by sea and by land, and no inconsiderable part of her naval glory'.<sup>100</sup> Defoe's fictional work also gave rise to an interest in tales of 'real' adventure: 1840 onwards saw a wealth of 'factual' accounts of exotic parts of the world (after all, *Robinson Crusoe* purported to be a true story). Sea stories were a key part of these tales: Richard Dana's *Two Years Before the Mast* (1840), which documents (in the words of Bratton 1981: 103): 'the winds of the Pacific, Californian hide-training, the routine and structure of the merchant service of America...sea-sickness to sharks and tropical gales, and on to Cape Horn and icebergs in quick succession' and other works with titles such as *Uncle Ned's Stories of the Tropics*, or *Life in a Whaler*, became extremely popular from 1840 onwards. *Robinson Crusoe* gave rise to numerous 'imitations, repetitions and versions' (Bratton 1981: 105) that would become known as 'Robinsonades'.<sup>101</sup> The most famous of these shipwreck and island-survival adventures were Captain Frederick Marryat's *Masterman Ready* (1841) and R. M. Ballantyne's *The Coral Island* (1857).<sup>102</sup> Ballantyne, a prolific author of adventure stories, depicts the adventures of three young men who, stranded on a desert island, reap its natural resources, witness cannibalism, and are eventually rescued by an English missionary. The Robinsonades would broaden into a wider genre of sea adventure stories, shifting focus from the desert island settings to life at sea itself, including the vast oeuvre of G. A. Henty, and W. H. G. Kingston (*Peter the Whaler*, 1851; *The Three Midshipmen*, 1873). Both these fictional and non-fictional tales were designed not only to introduce boys to important factual knowledge (historical and geographical facts, also practical knowledge including seafaring) as Bratton 1981: 105 explains, but also to encourage their self-reliance, which would ensure 'confidence in the superiority, potential or realisation of one's larger self – the Service, or the nation.' The saturation of the market with these adventure stories, generated from *Robinson Crusoe*, with its 'hardy deeds' and 'the spirit of strange and romantic enterprise', and travel 'by sea', allows the possibility of the rehabilitation of Lamb's *Adventures of Ulysses* in the same light as *Robinson Crusoe* to become clearer: the triangulation of the *Odyssey*, adventure, and children's literature. The *Iliad* would also be published as children's literature at the

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<sup>100</sup> *Lavengro*. New York: Macmillan, 1927:19–20.

<sup>101</sup> The earliest of these Robinsonnades – *The Swiss Family Robinson*, was first translated by the second wife of William Godwin, Mary Jane Godwin in 1814.

<sup>102</sup> A direct inspiration for William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* – whose protagonists, Ralph and Jack, share names with the protagonists of Ballantyne's novel.

turn of the twentieth century (for example, by Alfred Church – a figure to whom will return to at the end of this chapter), and as Rachel Bryant Davies (2016) has demonstrated, featured in other areas of children’s culture, serving as a setting for the backdrop of toy theatres: however, any earlier literary versions of the poem specifically for children more often than not remain hidden, and are not brought to light by similar searches for the *Odyssey*.

The power of these adventures was still not given infinite imaginative freedom: instead, fictional adventures, according to Mangan 1989: 174 ‘celebrated evangelical decency, the work ethic and imperial expansion’. More importantly, clear-cut boundaries between the world of adventure and the fictional ‘real world’ were essential. In the promotion of the British Empire, adventure was a way of delineating the margins and limitations of the real world. As Mathison 2008: 183 argues, the fantastic elements of nineteenth-century adventures stories are shut down by the end of the book:

‘In *The Coral Island*, *Treasure Island* and *King Solomon’s Mines*, the narrator-heroes ensure their young readers cannot hope to follow their maps. This move ensures narrative closure by severing the fantasy world of the adventures – shipwrecks, pirates, cannibalistic natives and treasure – and returning readers to the adult worlds of civilisation.’

As Odysseus returns to Ithaca, the world of his adventures is similarly demarcated: whilst he retells his adventures to Penelope (*Od.* 23.301–9) and will go on a future voyage (*Od.* 11.119–37), for the duration of the Homeric poem, the worlds of the fantastic and of Ithaca are separated. Even though his return home is fraught and complicated, the narrative trope in boys’ adventure of a successful return begins to supercede questions of Odysseus’ methods: if ‘home’ for Odysseus, or for a young Victorian reader, is a kingdom paralleled with the British Empire, Odysseus’ claim on a good return can not be undermined for fear of an underlying anti-patriotic sentiment.

The fictional and non-fictional adventures of children’s literature are two of the three categories which Mangan 1989: 174 characterises as the three definitive types of nineteenth-century children’s literature: the third being the Sunday school tract. However, it was the most fantastic aspects of the *Odyssey* that came increasingly under the spotlight: fictional adventure was the most egalitarian of these three types of literature, as it was appealing and applicable to children (especially boys) of all social

backgrounds (Mangan 1989: 174). The fantastic nature of the story, the thematic relevance of the *Odyssey* to other fictional stories, along with the practical relevance of travel and adventure meant that the poem could be read also as 'social and political discourse', as argued by Holt 2008: 78. Early signs of an international, imperialist outlook have been witnessed in Lamb: the next part of the thesis examines not full retellings of the *Odyssey*, but the invocation of the poem in periodical literature, which was amongst the most widely-accessible reading for children in the late Victorian period. The intertextual incorporation of the Homeric poem illustrates the influence of *The Adventures of Ulysses* – which was now the most frequently published form of the *Odyssey* for children, and the shift in the landscape that had been led by this work.

In order to illustrate the transformation and exploitation of the *Odyssey* for children in an imperial light, I briefly examine some examples from periodicals such as *The Boy's Own Paper* – the most popular (and politicized) periodical of juvenile literature – which invoke the *Odyssey* in a kind of wholesome adventure which served as an antithesis to the penny dreadfuls which Edward Salmon had so feared, before comparing their sentiments with passages from Lamb's *The Adventures of Ulysses*. However, imperial exploits would require more than the leadership of the elite: the middle classes would be necessary in order to maintain the Empire. Or, as Parkes 2009: 71 puts it, novels such as *Treasure Island* promote 'the myth of the civil service that, in doing the work of state and empire, is a technically proficient, administrative class but one with a taste for romance – a class that can both keep an accurate accounts ledger and fire off a brace of pistols'. Odysseus, in his resourcefulness, intelligence and military experience, but also because the poem allowed for an interpretation of his character which was unilaterally positive, was ripe to be integrated into the picture of literature read by children at this time. Of course, British children would also be raised abroad, away from the 'homeland': as Vasunia 2005: 37 argues, classics was not just part of 'a Victorian national culture in Britain' but also British colonial interests abroad, where 'Greek and Latin served as sites for continuous and highly charged negotiations of imperial power' (2005: 66), and also as 'vehicles for the management of such domestic categories as bourgeois civility and middle-class identity as well as for the regulation and maintenance of imperial power' (2013: 195). Formal education was one way of maintaining such domestic and imperial categories: however, children's literature studies have explored how nation-building started at a younger age, and outside formal

educational institutions. For children of colonial administrators, both at home and abroad, Greek and Latin were a constituent part of these attempts at imperial indoctrination at an early age — the *Odyssey* again appealing because of its recreational power.

The publication revival of Lamb's *The Adventures of Ulysses* (initially amongst the *oeuvre* of Lamb more broadly, but then independently from 1890) was contemporary with the founding of what was, according to Dunae 1989: 22, 'arguably the most important and influential juvenile periodical ever published' – *The Boy's Own Paper* (1879–1967). The title 'Boy's Own' had been used in a variety of periodical publications, beginning with *The Boy's Own Magazine* (first published in 1855), but the *B.O.P.*, as it is commonly referred to, reached huge circulation numbers: Dunae 1989: 23 notes that six months after its launch in 1879, the *B.O.P.* claimed 600,000 readers (based on print runs – these boys likely shared their works with others, making the actual readership much higher: Dunae estimates 1.4 million – presumably within Britain, given the context of his article, though this is not specified. The population of England and Wales in 1881 was 25,974,439, according to the University of Portsmouth's *A Vision of Britain* project ).<sup>103</sup> The references made to the *Odyssey* in issues of this periodical are then, not only influential, but designed to resonate with a broad readership – made practical by its penny price. Published weekly by the Religious Tract Society, the *B.O.P.* was designed to counter the penny dreadfuls, which encouraged (often violent) tales of highwaymen and pirates, but it is most recognisable source of the era for patriotic tales for young boys. Though Warner 1977: 13 describes the *B.O.P.* as having 'abounded in violence', this was forgivable because of the Christian context (Philips 2012: 149). Rather than focusing on monsters, or the domestic, the collective adventures of the *Odyssey* are exalted for their ability to be fantastic whilst speaking to real life,<sup>104</sup> as witnessed in a piece entitled 'How I Found My Way Into Morlaix: A Boating Adventure on the Coast of Finisterre' by Frank Cooper from 1881:

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<sup>103</sup> [http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/SRC\\_P/3/EW1881GEN](http://www.visionofbritain.org.uk/census/SRC_P/3/EW1881GEN)

<sup>104</sup> The flexibility of the Homeric poem is exploited in the range of topics to which it was applied. The *Odyssey* (along with Fénelon) was invoked in periodicals from 1862: one series entitled 'Manly Exercises' in *The Boy's Own Magazine* (1862: 354), saw swimming and bathing as strengthening and invigorating, citing Thetis dipping Achilles into the Styx, but also 'the same opinion is expressed by Homer in his "Odyssey" and also by Fénelon in his "Telemachus".'

‘On a boat in the Mediterranean – ‘so I sat holding the tiller, crossing “the wine-dark sea,” thinking of the men of old who ventured out on the Barren Sea, fearing, yet daring. Surely old Homer must have loved the sea, and before he lost his eyes, when yet a boy, must have sailed some tiny craft with vermilion prow and lofty stern. How full of the awe of a true navigator is the *Odyssey*, and how true to nature in consequence!’” (1881: 68)

Depicting a supposedly real-life journey undertaken by the author, the invocation of the *Odyssey* comes directly after the foreshadowing of the main drama of the piece: a storm which threatens the loss of the boat, and, the author embellishes: ‘probably the loss of my own life’ (1881: 68). After overcoming the storm, the author is washed up onto the coast, and when reaching his companions he finds that he had been presumed dead:

‘There I found great excitement had been caused by my absence. All the world had concluded I was drowned, and were either much relieved or disappointed at my turning up. The mist had been so thick that night that the fisherman had been out and could not find even their nets, and great was their astonishment that I had been able to find my way from Morlaix.’ (1881: 68)

Following the explicit reference, Cooper’s arrival becomes suggestive of both Odysseus’ arrival on the coast of Phaeacia in *Od.* 5, but also his return to Ithaca in *Od.* 13, where Odysseus is left upon the sand by the Phaeacians (13.117–9) and Athena ‘poured a mist’ (*Od.* 13.190) over Ithaca so that it was unrecognisable to Odysseus. The disappointment and relief amongst the locals of Morlaix, who had presumed he was drowned, recalls Eurymachus’ assumption of Odysseus’ death (*Od.* 2.182–3) and playfully understates the contrast in the reactions between those loyal to Odysseus and the suitors. However, this interpretation is only made possible following a statement about how the *Odyssey* is full of the ‘awe of a true navigator’ and its bearing on real life, perhaps even the kind of trip along the French coast that a young reader might be able to emulate one day. Cooper also draws on the universality of such experiences by suggesting that the poet himself as a young boy must have enjoyed such journeys, one implication being that if the young reader can experience the same juvenile activities as one of the great, canonical poets, then his potential too, is exceptional.

Similarly, fictional maritime tales that are written with an attempt at a kind of stretched realism also emphasise the utility of Greek to communicate not just

practically, but sympathetically. Ascott R. Hope's<sup>105</sup> 'A Strange Trip Abroad' serial (6 parts, June 4–July 9 1887) sees an old gentleman tell a tale to his grandson in a railway station waiting room in Brittany: the point is to teach the young boy about hospitality towards travellers, after they encounter a young Irish girl who is struggling to travel with no French, and the grandson cannot understand the attention paid by his grandfather to helping her. The man is 'prosperous' and well-dressed (1887a: 561): he tells a story of how his own first voyage 'on the Continent' was as 'a barefoot vagabond' (1887a: 561) when holidaying in Ramsgate, he was swept out to sea whilst swimming off the coast. He is picked up by a ship, and eventually ends up in the Netherlands: throughout the voyage, he cannot communicate easily with those who he meets, until he meets a clergyman, with whom he attempts to speak first French, and then Latin as a *lingua franca*:

“Naufractus,” said I, who if not shipwrecked, was certainly cast away upon an unknown shore. My reverend host at once pricked up his ears and stared on me in surprise at hearing one word of learning from such a disreputable looking character. He replied to me in what I made out to be Latin, but so volubly that I could not catch a word, especially as he pronounced it in quite a different way from what we were taught in England.

Then, perhaps understanding my difficulty, he pulled out a pencil and a piece of paper and wrote very legibly, “Discipulus literarum es?” (1887b: 609)

However, Latin proves to be ultimately useless in assisting the helpless traveller, not because it would not have been understood, but rather because it does not allow the traveller to express himself in either the practical, or most sympathetic way:

‘I could tell him, if he had cared to know, that nobody is wise at all times, that it is the nature of man to err,<sup>106</sup> that silver is of less value than gold, gold than virtue, and so forth,<sup>107</sup> much more readily than I could communicate how hungry and helpless I was. Like most schoolboys of that period, and perhaps of this, I had learned to treat

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<sup>105</sup> Hope wrote many adventure stories, including *Stories of Young Adventurers* (1883). He also wrote *A Book of Boyhoods* (1882) – a compilation of real and fictional biographies of childhood, including that of Charles Lamb.

<sup>106</sup> From a variety of sources – the thought being expressed in Cicero *Philippics* 12.2.5 and also attributed to Seneca. It is more formally made by Jerome *Epistles* 57.12, and most famously by Pope's *An Essay on Criticism* 1.525.

<sup>107</sup> Horace *Epistles* 1.1.52.

Latin as a dead language, fit for the enunciation of moral sentences and historical relations, but not so capable for expressing the ordinary occurrences and emotions of everyday life.' (1887b: 609)

Here, it is the *Odyssey* that provides the grounding needed for a suitable gift of hospitality:

'By great good luck I bethought myself of a passage from one of the very last repetitions I had learned at school...Enough to say that the lines thus imprinted on my unwilling memory now did me a service worth many stripes. They were Greek, too, a bit from Homer's "Odyssey". Nowadays I could not quote the original to save my life; but I can give you Pope's translation of the passage – a rather loose one, by the way, if I am not mistaken – which then I was able to set down in my best Greek characters, and even to make a shot at the proper accents:

"Through many woes and wanderings, lo! I come  
To good Alcinous' hospitable dome.  
Far from my native coast I rove alone,  
A wretched stranger, and of all unknown!" (1887b: 609)

The clergyman excitedly thinks he is entertaining a scholar instead of a vagrant, and instead of bread and cheese and buttermilk in the kitchen, he is given a full meal in 'the best room of the house'. The fact that it is the *Odyssey* (the translation from Pope referring to *Od.* 7.22–6, where Athena, disguised as a Phaeacian child, is asked by Odysseus for directions to Alcinous' palace), which opens up a channel of communication is no coincidence: the suggestion that one day, the young reader might be able to distinguish the helpful and virtuous by a shared knowledge of Greek, is part of learning to read the signs of shared social standing. In this case, as well as showcasing the empathetic and aesthetic qualities of Greek, in the explicit contrast with Latin works, the *Odyssey* is highlighted as being more relevant to boys of 1887, able to convey 'ordinary occurrences and emotions of everyday life'. It may be Pope's 'mannered' translation that is cited, permitted by the protagonist's education (underscored by the barbed comment on its accuracy), but the resonance of the situation, and the invocation of the *Odyssey* in this light, was first facilitated by Lamb, and his Romantic understanding of the poem. In particular, the application of Greek to achieve the most sympathetic outcome reminds us of Godwin and Lamb's intention to cultivate sympathy in the young, and more specifically, the sympathy elicited by Lamb's description of



Odysseus' men. The sense of authenticity cultivated by the Romantic approach to sole traveller narratives – first applied explicitly to the *Odyssey* by Lamb – had allowed the same kind of connections to be made almost eighty years later. Lamb's recreational understanding of the poem had laid the foundations for the way in which the *Odyssey* would be brought to mind at the end of the nineteenth century.

Institutions and their leaders were also cast explicitly in the glorified status of the *Odyssey*, which was singled out even above the *Iliad* in this light by Edwin Roberts in *The Boy's Own Magazine*, in an article titled 'The Story of the British Navy':

'After the "Iliad" comes the "Odyssey", which, for romance, and charm, and positive delight, is worth, to the lovers of startling deeds, a dozen "Iliads". The story of the British Navy, as compared with any other portion of British history, is just what the "Odyssey" is compared with the "Iliad".' ([1862–3]: 69)<sup>108</sup>

What exactly does Roberts invoke when he says the Navy is the *Odyssey* to the rest of British history's *Iliad*? He depends, of course, on the poem's geographical breadth, but also on an ultimately optimistic view of the poem. Apart from 'startling deeds', the former poem sees the hero return home at the end of his travels and ultimately resume his position in Ithaca. Assuming an unproblematic stance concerning the manner of Odysseus' return, and given the pride in the British Navy as the central defender of the Empire, Roberts seems to imply that the *Odyssey* depicts a story of success, where home, or Britain, is a stable entity. For Roberts, the British maritime forces are Lamb's 'gallant navy' brought to life, where the safety of Ithaca is the imperial homeland. In another example, the imperial connection becomes even more apparent, when the *Odyssey* becomes a way of admiring the breadth of the Empire, as he compares the Prince of Wales to its hero:

'But the Prince has been a great traveller. If not "from India to Peru,"<sup>109</sup> he has at least then [travelled] from Chicago, and farther West than that, to Calcutta. And although, not always in his travels, which have been, in his comparatively short life, much more extensive

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<sup>108</sup> The exact date is not given in the publication, but the adverts in the same issue are dated 1862, which suggests 1862–3 at latest.

<sup>109</sup> Immediately before this passage, the author refers to the 'beautiful old Sunday school hymn of Bishop Heber (Bishop, by the way of Calcutta, where our Prince recently was) says – "From Greenland's icy mountains to India's coral strand." This is the context for this quotation, although it is not clear how Peru is involved, as it does not feature in the hymn nor was part of the travels of the bishop.

than those of Ulysses or Marco Polo, he has been for the most part “at home;” that is to say, in territory ruled by his mother.’<sup>110</sup>

Such examples from a broader context of contemporary children’s reading, in its most imperialistic context, alongside the existing patriotic elements of Lamb’s work, can help us to understand how the Lamb who was vilified in the early part of the century, can by 1900, be called ‘flowing, eloquent and melodious’<sup>111</sup> in his adaptation of the *Odyssey*, which is now hailed as a ‘signal success’.<sup>112</sup> By the end of the nineteenth-century, reviews of Lamb, rather than bemoaning his style and heavy-handed rearrangement of the narrative, describe similar enterprises as having ‘no advantage over Lamb’s *Adventures of Ulysses*’<sup>113</sup> which is ‘one of the most tempting books for young readers that we have seen’<sup>114</sup> and ‘full of rich beauties’. Indeed, even his troublesome style is praised as ‘classical’.<sup>115</sup> By contextualising the examples from Lamb with manifestations of the *Odyssey* in other juvenile literature, we can see how Lamb’s new generation of readers would have been sensitive to his writing, which provides precisely the kind of images conjured by the imperial literature of the time. Hope’s citation of Pope suggests that children’s authors who write their own versions of the *Odyssey* look back to texts aimed at adults, yet this quotation plays a functional role, serving the narrator practically, but also framing his own adventures as a kind of *Odyssey*, only grounded in the real world. It was only following the multi-faceted social, political, and cultural developments of the nineteenth-century, which could mesh thematically with the Homeric poem, that Lamb’s legacy – where the *Odyssey* for children was about the adventures of Odysseus – could be fully established. The final stage of both Lamb’s acceptance, and his treatment of the *Odyssey*, was the integration of Lamb’s work by esteemed educators – including classical scholars.

#### iv. Lamb enters the classroom

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<sup>110</sup> ‘Boys of England Story Teller. Under the Old Oak Tree’, *Boys of England A Journal of Sport, Travel, Fun and Instruction for the Youths of All Nations*, 16 June, 1876: 44.

<sup>111</sup> *The Quarterly review* 1900: 329.

<sup>112</sup> 1900: 328.

<sup>113</sup> ‘Books for Children’, *The Academy*, 8 December 1900: 562.

<sup>114</sup> Anon., ‘Lamb’s *Adventures of Ulysses*’, *London Quarterly Review*, 1890: 194.

<sup>115</sup> 1890: 194.

At the dawn of the twentieth century, classicists were getting in on the act of writing children's versions of ancient texts. Two figures – Andrew Lang and Alfred Church – were the most prominent examples of this latest breed of writers engaging with the *Odyssey* for children. The first author, Lang, was a scholarly polymath, who as well as being an early advocate of an anthropological approach to mythology, also translated and published on Homer, primitive religion, Shakespeare, sports, and psychical research (Turner 1981: 117). As a Fellow of Merton College, Oxford, he had collaborated with Samuel Butcher (also a Fellow at Oxford, before becoming Professor of Greek at Edinburgh) on a successful translation of the *Odyssey*. In 1890, he would team up with Henry Rider Haggard, the author of imperial adventure fiction such as *King Solomon's Mines* and *She*, to write an afterlife of the *Odyssey* – *The World's Desire* – which saw Odysseus return to Ithaca after his second voyage, only to find it ravaged and desolate, and then be forced on a mystical quest for Helen in Egypt. Despite Lang's distinguished classical career, he is better known for his own children's publishing. *Andrew Lang's Fairy Books* (also known as *Andrew Lang's 'Coloured' Fairy Books*) collected myths, stories, and legends from around the world (some which had never been published in English before) and presented them to children in volumes (the first being *Blue Fairy Book* in 1889). From his oeuvre, and his internationally outward-looking approach to literature, it was clear that Lamb's *The Adventures of Ulysses*, and the type of reading experience it offered children, was in sync with Lang's own approach to literature.

In 1890, the same year as his collaboration with Haggard, and only a year after the first of his *Fairy Books*, Andrew Lang wrote the introduction for a new republication of Lamb's work. In it, he exploits his role as educator, using his expertise to address the contextual knowledge that can no longer be assumed of child readers, or even adults. He calls the *Odyssey*:

'... so very old, and people lived so differently when it was made from the way in which we live now, that perhaps a few things in the tale may seem hard to understand. So we shall try to make them clear before we begin the story.' (1890: 5)

Lang takes on the didactic role, using simple language to outline the geography, social structure, architecture, and daily life of Odysseus' world. He provides

transliterated examples of the first two lines of the Homeric poem in the Latin alphabet, and gives the narrative context of the abduction of Helen, and the recruitment of Odysseus into the Trojan War. Bringing his expertise to the fore, he explains the oral transmission of the Homeric poem, which he says was ‘told by word of mouth, just as you may hear one child tell another a fairy-tale’ (1890: 9) – continuing the association of genre made explicit by Bell, but also assimilating oral poetry with primitivism and an inherent childishness. Suddenly, the Homeric poems themselves are drawn as material that is transmitted orally by children themselves. Lang even goes as far to introduce children to the question of transmission, believing the Homeric poet wrote this story ‘for it makes up four hundred pages of English printing, and I defy him to have remembered all that as he made it up’ (1890: 10). In an imperial age, Lang has to remind his audience that knowledge of far-off continents was limited:

‘Now you must be told that they knew only a small part of the world...These old Greeks only knew Greece, and the islands near it, and the coast of Asia Minor, and Egypt, and perhaps Sicily. Look what a tiny part of the world that is on the map!’ (1890: 7)

The achievements of Odysseus in his travels are framed in terms of the primitivism of the ancient world. Despite his emphasis on the remoteness of the ancient past, he continues to connect it with present experiences: for example, ‘The cups were of gold and silver, and others were of clay – something like we make flower-pots of. You can see plenty of them in the British Museum, in the big gallery upstairs. But few of these are as old as Ulysses’ time’ (1890: 7). Lang outlines a significant amount of factual material, but at the same time, strong literary distinctions are made between the *Odyssey* as literature and this factual knowledge. The Greek pantheon and religious practices are dismissed as ‘mere fancy of course, and not true, but [it was] pleasant to believe’ (1890: 8). In introducing the content of the poem, he outlines the events both on Ithaca and afar, but Lang introduces it as Lamb, not as the *Odyssey*, addressing the adventures first:

‘Now the story tells of all the wonderful things that happened to him in his wanderings – how he met giants and goddesses, and monsters of the deep, and cannibals that eat man’s flesh, and how he saw the ghosts of the dead. How he was shipwrecked, and all his men were killed or drowned. How his son went to look for him, and met fair Helen happy at home with her own husband, and how she gave him a

present for his bride when he married. How Ulysses came home at last...' (1890: 13)

Even the classical scholar does not feel obliged to recount the events of the *Odyssey* in narratological order – in fact, he deliberately separates the narrative from that of Lamb, so that he can direct the young readers to the Homeric poem. He writes:

'The story, here, is made out of the poem for children by Charles Lamb, who wrote many other delightful books. But perhaps some day you may read the whole poem, either in Greek, if you learn it, or in a translation in English. I hope so.' (1890: 14)

It may be a 'delightful book', but Lamb's *The Adventures of Ulysses* is not the *Odyssey*, which Lang is at further pains to clarify in a postscript:

'[Lamb's version of the *Odyssey* is extremely free, mainly from Chapman. He actually introduces the Olympian games, and takes other liberties with facts and with ideas. The author of the Introduction records a humble protest. The version of the flight of Helen is from Eusebius. – A.L.]' (1890: 14)

Lang emphasizes Lamb's additions to the narrative, and does not take issue with his reduction of events on Ithaca, or the whitewashing of Ulysses' brutal political reestablishment. Despite the clarification by Lang, the very fact that he adds his own introduction to Lamb's story, and invites his reader to consider the poem a 'fairy-tale' to be read for pleasure serves to validate Lamb. Lang, with his institutional authority, had advocated *The Adventures of Ulysses* in its own right, recognizing that children's versions of the *Odyssey* can exist independently of the Homeric poem without proving to be a threat. The reviewers agreed, remarking that it was:

'One of the most tempting books for young readers that we have seen'.  
'There is no need to praise Lamb's style – that is classical. The book will open a new world to its readers, and make them eager to know more of Troy and its heroes. Mr. Lang's chatty introduction is just the thing for young folk. Its account of a Greek house, of the gods and goddesses, and of Helen's adventures will add much to the profit and pleasure with which the adventures will be read.'  
(*London Quarterly Review*, 1890: 194)

Lang's specialist knowledge was a new benefit to the existing catalogue of Homeric narratives for children, but it could only claim half the credit for making the publication a success. The critics recognised that the 'pleasure' provided by Lamb's narrative was of value in its own right. The author who had been so heavily criticised for his style was now considered 'classical', as both a representation of the *Odyssey*, but also a formative text in the children's canon of classical literature. Lang produced his own version of the *Odyssey* for children upon the publication of *Tales of Troy and Greece* in 1908 – a narrative that integrated the poem with the *Iliad*, in chronological order. In a review of this later work, the reviewer recognises that qualities indicative of Lamb's work exactly a hundred years earlier were now regarded an essential part of the representation of classical literature for children more broadly:

'The stories of the childhood of the world have become the storehouse of the childhood of to-day. Not for the first time does Mr. Andrew Lang now turn to the child's account his love and knowledge of Homeric themes. And in this book he has brought the real Homer nearer than ever to the modern child... sudden appeals to the comparison of modern days and places, that set the picture for a modern child– or the older modern lover of a well-told story – Fairyland and Wonderland made real. These are the charm and the marvel of this story-book of Greece and Troy... never for a moment does the archaeologist overcome the teller of a tale. But we can imagine no happier schoolboy than he who, having become familiar with this book from cover to cover, for the love of the story and its glittering colour, suddenly realises that in his Homer the tale is retold for him: surely the Greek must lose its terrors for that fortunate one.'  
(*The Academy*, 1908: 370)

The methods of writing the *Odyssey* could be supported by the efforts of pedagogue, but the Greek tale could only 'lose its terrors' through the novel combination first recognized by Lamb: a fantastic, adventure-centric approach, combined with the desire to be relevant to child readers, the association of the *Odyssey* with imaginative literature, and the blurring of genres and the vivacity of imagery, had become foundational for children's versions of the poem. These qualities that are praised in Lang's original work – in particular the drawing of the ancient world as 'Fairyland' and 'Wonderland' – were first facilitated by Lamb's *The Adventures of Ulysses*.

Where Lamb was inspirational for Lang, for another scholar he was paradigmatic: Reverend Alfred J. Church was a prolific adapter of classical works for adults and

children, as well as being a clergyman, former schoolteacher and Professor of Latin at University College London. His titles for children included versions of classical texts and original fiction inspired by the classical past, with titles originating in literature rarely presented to children, including: *Stories from Livy*; *Lucius, Adventures of a Roman Boy*; *Nicias and the Sicilian Expedition* (cf. Thucydides), *Stories of the East from Herodotus*, *Stories from the Greek Tragedians* (including Aeschylus, Sophocles, Euripides) and *Stories from the Greek Comedians* (Aristophanes, Menander, Philemon, Apollodorus, Diphilus), to name a few. In terms of the Homeric poems, he had published multiple editions: he had first written *Stories from Homer* (1876), followed by *Stories from the Iliad* (1892) and *Stories from the Odyssey* (1892), which were all intended for the general public, these were reworked and republished as the individual children's versions mentioned in his memoir: 'I have written a 'Children's Odyssey' and a 'Children's Iliad,' changing the style from the archaic to one of colloquial simplicity" (1908: 241). The children's version was brought to the American market before the British one, under the title *The Odyssey for Boys and Girls* (1906). When it came to writing versions of the Homeric poems for children, Church had one specific point of reference. He admired Lamb's *The Adventures of Ulysses* so greatly that he was hesitant to write his own version of the *Odyssey*:

'My first thought was to do something to Charles Lamb's [*The Adventures of Ulysses*] 'Tales from the Odyssey.' But when it came to the point, my courage failed me. To meddle with Lamb! Whether I could do it to any purpose or not, I knew – who should know better? – what the critics would say. I was on the point of giving up the whole scheme, when my wife convinced me to preserve. There was the 'Iliad' which Lamb had not touched. And there were various details where change might be introduced with advantage. Lamb, for instance, always used the Latin names of the gods. So I set to work...It had an immediate success – four thousand were sold before the end of the year.' (1908: 240)

Lamb had become *the* paradigm for authors writing the *Odyssey* for children – critics advocated it, and moreover, it was having a defining influence on classical scholars themselves.

Whilst these university scholars had embraced the recreational reading of Lamb, the ultimate vindication would be its appearance on the school curriculum. On June 13 1894, a boy in Dublin sat his second examination for the English Intermediate

Examination (Preparatory Grade). As part of his paper, he answered five questions on John Cooke's 1983 edition of Lamb's *The Adventures of Ulysses* (originally published in England in 1892). His performance on the exam was unremarkable – scoring 455 out of a possible 1200 marks (McCleery 1990: 635) – and yet this school encounter was a definitive moment for twentieth century literature: this boy was James Joyce. Joyce's passion for Lamb's text laid the foundations for a defining literary work of Modernism, *Ulysses*, but also one of the most influential receptions of the *Odyssey* in the twentieth century. Whilst scholars of Joyce have tended to fixate on Lamb's originating role as a literary hypotext, the very fact that it had become a school text – a text with not just critical, but institutional approval – less than a century after the reviews that brought its morality into question was remarkable. McCleery 1990: 636 has argued that the selection of Cooke's edition, rather than the vastly more popular version of Lang, was significant as (elaborating on Stanford 1954: 3; 213) the detailed factual and didactic nature of Lang's preface would have been 'repellent' to a boy looking for 'mystical' enjoyment. However, in reality, Lang had done little to Lamb's text itself, and Cooke's amendments were largely the removal of sexual imagery (seven of the twelve examples listed by McCleery are sexual, such as 'wicked' replacing 'adulterous', and the rest are concerned with bodily imagery – the removal of the word 'belly', and 'evil' replacing 'bloody'). Whilst Cooke may have cleaned up the text of these references to make the process of teaching easier, and less embarrassing for both pupil and teacher, there are no objections to the nature of the story. Cooke has not fundamentally altered significant passages, and neither had Lang. Lang had the scholarly reputation needed to promote his edition, but it would be disingenuous to suggest that the edition was textually different enough to make a significant difference to Lamb's narrative.

More significant is the fact that Joyce's exposure even to Lamb was only partial. As Wykes 1968: 302 notes, Joyce's class only read seven of ten chapters, up until Ulysses reaches Eumaeus' hut and meets Telemachus – focusing exclusively on the adventures. Even when bowdlerized, as school editions were, the use of edited versions of Lamb were still promoting this adventure-centric version of the *Odyssey*. In 1912, an anonymous review of another edited edition of Lamb revealed that this incorporation into a school environment was not exceptional:



‘The ‘Adventures’ are occasionally too archaic in language, but are full of rich beauties... We hope this book, which is one of Bell’s English Texts for Secondary Schools, will be largely adopted.’ (1912: 254)

The place of this text not only on the curriculum, but also as examination selection, meant that *The Adventures of Ulysses*, and all that it entailed, was now an insider text. Lamb’s version had made a remarkable journey, ending up in the hands of scholars and pedagogues, and becoming the standard way of presenting the *Odyssey* to children – it would only be in the late twentieth century that signs of resistance to this narrative would begin to appear in publications for children.

#### Part IV: Not the *Odyssey*? The adventures reevaluated

In the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, we find key features of *The Adventures of Ulysses* being replicated in retellings of the *Odyssey* for children. However, a new set of emerging narratives that engage with the poem reacts directly to the traditional adventure storyline. As interest in marginal voices has developed, both in academia and in popular culture more broadly, children's authors have turned their attention to characters of the *Odyssey* whom they perceive to offer alternative, and potentially socially relevant perspectives on the poem. Some of these characters have their origins in the *Odyssey* – most notably Penelope and Telemachus – but some are original voices that act as a bridge between ancient text and modern young readers. Despite the attempts by authors to broaden the horizons of the poem by writing around it, there is a fundamental tension with the elevated masculinity of the now traditional, Lambian versions of the poem for children – in particular, the focus on the adventures of Odysseus. Whether these recent works deal with Odysseus' adventures directly or not, there is a sense that the authors involved in reworking the *Odyssey* are forced to confront them in some way: these modern reversions of the Homeric poem are built still around the notion that a young readership will understand the *Odyssey* as a poem centred on adventure.

This section of the thesis outlines some of the critical issues that underpin the differences between traditional children's retellings and modern *Odyssey*-engaged narratives through a brief overview of mid-to late twentieth century versions of the poem for children. It then focuses on three publications aimed at older children and teenagers (so-called young adult literature) published between 2005 and now – Adèle Geras' *Ithaka*, Patrick Bowman's *Torn from Troy* series, and Tracy Barrett's *King of Ithaka*. They are what Stephens and McCallum would identify as 'reversions' rather than 'reworkings': their term to describe 'a narrative which has taken apart its pre-texts and reassembled them as a version which is a new textual and ideological configuration'. Now, of course, Lamb also has a new ideological configuration in relation to Homer's *Odyssey*, but the difference here has to do with the overtness of the operation. The versions I consider here are also what scholars would recognize as *antagonistic* retellings, and that is not true of Lamb. The tensions present in the texts this chapter explores are realized not only by writing 'against' the *Odyssey*, but also through the

exploitation of the conventional role of adult-child antagonism in children's literature. Using these texts, we can uncover how works which are deliberately distanced from the *Odyssey* by their authors deal with the Homeric poem, and how established traditions of children's versions of the poem, originating with Lamb, play a foundational role in the cohesiveness of these modern stories.

#### i. Modern transformations

Before examining texts that are notable for their radical approach, it is important to fill in the progression of more straightforward retellings of the *Odyssey* for children until the present day, as there is some significant overlap in their development. The mid-twentieth century saw the publication of several works for children which continue to circulate widely today as formative texts within living memory: most notably, Barbara Leonie Picard's *The Odyssey* (1952) and Roger Lancelyn Green's *The Tale of Troy* (1958), which have been reprinted consistently from the 1950s to the 2010s.<sup>116</sup> Picard's work, which continues to be published by Oxford University Press children's division today, injects academic authority into children's literature, in a manner I have already explored in previous chapters (pp. 152–8). The motivation for her work was, as she perceived it, the absence of a 'complete retelling of the entire story of the poem for young people. The story is so good that it seems a pity that boys and girls should not read the whole of it' (2000: Preface). The issue of comprehensiveness is significant: versions by the previous generation of academic *Odyssey*-adapters retold the Telemachy and other books on Ithaca, but these authors had not openly complained of Lamb's compression of the narrative, making Picard's remark more potent. Picard seemed to regard the full narrative of the *Odyssey* as somewhat obsolete in children's literature on the whole, despite the contributions of previous generations. One explanation for this is contained in her statement that: 'Every boy and girl knows at least one of the adventures of Odysseus...there have been published numerous volumes of stories for children taken from the *Odyssey*' (2000: Preface). Picard's comment is better understood in the context of the rise of edited versions of the Homeric poem, or compendia of myth for children (as noted in the Introduction). The popularity of the

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<sup>116</sup> Lancelyn Green has been reissued in 1960, 1989, 1994, 2012. Picard has been reprinted in: 1960, 1962, 1965, 1967, 1971, 1974, 1978, and then published in paperback in 1991. The paperback edition was reprinted 1992, 1996, 1997, 1999, and a new edition was published in 2000.

*Odyssey* as a subject for children's authors has not diminished, but the rise of these compendia across the last century have meant that despite the consistent publication of whole-narrative adaptations, it is the adventure episodes which remain most familiar. However, the perceived absence of 'full-length' adaptations as a result of these compendia self-perpetuates a demand: the disproportionate success of publication of the adventures of the poem is one means of ensuring the entire narrative remains available, as authors choose to address a perceived absence of narrative context.

The geographical range of the adventures of the *Odyssey*, and their subsequent relationship with both Homeric and wider ancient mythological characters and places, initiated by the scholarly children's writers, also continued to be addressed. Roger Lancelyn Green (seminal Puffin Classics mythographer and member of the Oxford Inklings) renewed the traditions of Andrew Lang in drawing a wider map of the ancient Greek world. Green told the return of Odysseus as part of *The Tale of Troy* (1958), which recounts not only Odysseus' adventures, but the Judgment of Paris, The Trojan War and the returns of Agamemnon and Menelaus – forming a narrative based on the Epic Cycle more widely. The dedication by Green to 'the memory of two favourite authors, Rider Haggard and Andrew Lang, who together wrote *The World's Desire* which first led me to the study of Greek legend and literature' suggests a deeper motivation than a simple retelling of Homeric events. His first inspiration was not a conventional version of a Greek myth, but the radical reversion of the two Victorian authors: a first encounter with the Homeric poem precisely in the nineteenth-century framework of adventure. Modern children's authors continue to acknowledge the influence of specific texts from previous generations, highlighting the recurring resonance of childhood reading in the creation of new works.

This is not to imply that there is a linear framework for children's adaptations. As this thesis has demonstrated so far, children's versions of the Homeric poem are no less complex in their horizontal cultural influences than those produced for adults. As Haubold 2007: 44 notes, 'A linear model of reception, where elements of Homeric epic are creatively imitated and adapted, is called into question by the competing and overlapping notions of the timeless text'. Interactions between different generations of children's authors – such as between Fénelon and Lamb, Lamb and Lang, Lang and Green, illustrate how the *Odyssey* can be refracted through multiple texts simultaneously. In the twenty-first century, children's reversions of the *Odyssey*

continue to look backwards not only at the Homeric poem, but also subsequent children's publications as they process modern responses to the poem – resulting in an altered, but no less significant role for the adventures of the *Odyssey*.

The shift in direction towards creative reversions began to become apparent in the mid-to-late twentieth century. As classical education had become a specialist curriculum through the twentieth century (Stray 1998: 271–97), the taste of adapting of the *Odyssey* for children had begun to be handed over to authors known for their story-telling ability, rather than from a specialist background on the pre-text. Publishers and audiences still seek a degree of authority in the author (as Godwin had done in choosing Lamb) but from the 1950s onwards this has shifted away from commissioning those with a specialist interest (Green, Picard, and Sutcliff all wrote multiple publications on mythology) and towards a different kind of authority – that is, writers who are established as good storytellers. Authors began to focus on creating versions that were 'accessible', whilst giving young readers a sense of the ancient past. However, what is meant by 'accessibility'? It cannot simply refer to the clarity of language – and in any case, the difficulties resulting from Lamb's 'rapidity of narration' show the false simplicity of this enterprise. Instead, it hinges on the idea that the classical world should be made appealing to children from all backgrounds through writing that resonates with them, and that this same writing should be entertaining enough to compete with other forms of recreation.

One facilitator in making the *Odyssey* more 'accessible' is the mixing of registers that Stephens and McCallum (1998: 11–2) argue is a key component in how the metanarratives of children's retellings develop. Geraldine McCaughrean's *The Odyssey* (1993) for Puffin Classics places a high premium on readability – using simple archaic language ('It would choke me to eat in the company of these uncharitable dogs' 1993: 87) combined with modern colloquial language ('What would Odysseus do if he were in my place? He wouldn't let these bullies have their own way' 1993: 68) for clarity of expression, and at the same time emphasizing both the historical remoteness of the setting and attempting to resonate with the daily lives of contemporary readers. The use of modern idiom invites young readers to reflect on their own lives via the ancient world, and invites the child to associate themselves with the characters that use their

own language. Most recently, in *The Odyssey* (2012) by Gillian Cross,<sup>117</sup> the author balanced the rationale behind human actions and their consequences. Cross was keen for the complexity of Odysseus' role as leader to become apparent, which meant that she highlights his reasoning using a modern tone: 'Odysseus was anxious not to spend the night on the beach...But he couldn't abandon the men he had sent inland' (2012: 22); 'His men were still nervous, but he persuaded them to stay' (2012: 31); 'They had just saved his life by their faithfulness. Now all he had to offer them was a choice of death – or death' (2012: 87). Cross' Odysseus takes on a particular personal responsibility as leader, diverging from the Homeric poem, where the bias of the poet in favour of the protagonist is apparent (Strauss Clay 1976: 315–7; 1997: 38), especially in the emphasis on the responsibility of the companions, as featured in the proem of the *Odyssey* (see Pucci 1998: 19). Haubold 2000: 126–37 argues that the death of the companions is an essential ingredient in creating Odysseus' fame, through consolidating the narrative bias, but the reality is that Odysseus ought to save his people, who instead die for him. Schein 1996: 30 also has argued that the Homeric poem does draw Odysseus' leadership into question – in particular, his falling asleep on Thrinacia, meaning his men do not resist eating the cattle of Helios, and the excessive loss of men to the Laestrygonians and Cyclops. However, Cross, unlike scholars, is not obligated to make sense of the moral universe of the *Odyssey* on its own terms, and she brings this responsibility into greater question in relation to the corpus of children's versions of the poem. By doing so, she redefines the protagonist as a hero: she humanizes Odysseus, encompassing his faults in an effort to create a character with realistic and indeed likeable traits. Authors are beginning to address Odysseus' behaviour and psychology more critically and more overtly than ever before, and are keen to address children in a language that will resonate with them. This is in a move away from what Stephens and McCallum (1998: 11) would describe as a hieratic register, which is frequently allegorical and often implies an eternal order (in the case of classical myth, the gods). The resultant empathy with the characters of classical world is the new enabler of

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<sup>117</sup> Cross' work is also notable for its striking, multicoloured illustrations by Neil Packer which make use of Greek text (*Od.1.1–16* weaving around the page to form a stormy sea 2012:110). Illustrations have played an important role in the accessibility of children's adaptations: in an age where pictures can feature on every page, children develop skills in visual literacy alongside text. As well as heavily illustrated versions, Marcia Williams (1996) and Fiona Macdonald (2009) have created comic-strip and graphic novel versions of the poem. The visual potential offered by the *Odyssey* itself is surely another contributory factor to its success as children's literature, and a topic that would merit a separate study, alongside a broader exploration of children's culture and visual media, in particular, film and television.

accessibility: the didactic agendas of previous generations are instead facilitated through personal accounts with psychological depth, encouraging an identification between the young reader and characters who live in the ancient world.

The encouraged identification of young readers with the *Odyssey* is characteristic of broader developments. All of the publications mentioned thus far in this chapter adhere to the narrative structure first promoted by Lamb – third person narrator, told in chronological, rather than narrative order of the poem: beginning with contextualizing section on the Trojan War, followed by the Lotus Eaters, and the rest of the adventures. The primary focus on Odysseus' adventures has become internalized as part of the process of adapting the poem for children, but the numerous intervening versions of the poem between Lamb and the present day – such as compendia of myths (e.g. those by Robert Graves, which themselves owe a debt to ancient mythographers such as Apollodorus) have meant that there is little conscious awareness of Lamb's influence in the twenty-first century. Late twentieth and twenty-first century reversions have brought a particular understanding of the poem into popular consciousness: they are a reaction to a broader understanding of what the Homeric poem is about. In the process of telling a largely original story with sympathetic characters, children's authors are demarcating the bounds of the *Odyssey* in direct response to the established adventure-centric narrative.

There are two common approaches to these reversions: the first is to take an irreverent, humorous approach. Such methods are integral to Stephens and McCallum's definition of a reversion: 'even the most revered cultural icon can be subjected to a mocking or antagonistic retelling' (2010: 4) – including the *Odyssey*. The performer Tony Robinson and screenwriter Richard Curtis reframed the poem in a comedic light in *Odysseus, The Greatest Hero of Them All* (1986), published after the BBC television series of the same name. The book was itself republished as *Odysseus, superhero* (1996) – both titles giving the protagonist a modern twist on a Homeric epithet. The second approach involves the creation of original protagonists, who are often either children, or humorous characters. Beyond those versions of the *Odyssey* that take a comical tone, but make an attempt at replicating the Homeric narrative, these subversive tales have seen notable international success. Sometimes, the *Odyssey* provides the model for encounters that are faced by a new set of characters, who are often deliberately, and amusingly fallible. An intentional lack of reverence for the classical paradigm is the key

to Paul Shipton's *The Pig Diaries* (2002) and *The Pig Who Saved the World* (2005), which features Gryllus, one of companions transformed by Circe into a pig, actually content in his new form: he too goes on his own adventures, along with his friend, the whiny teenage bard Homer (for a closer reading, see Murnaghan 2015: 13–21). The author blends classical mythology with deliberate modern anachronisms, allowing the young reader to surmise the difference in origin of respective parts of the story. Similarly, the humour of Rick Riordan's blockbuster *Percy Jackson and the Olympians* series (2005–2009) depends on the placement of ancient figures in modern scenarios. Riordan's characters operate within a world that is partly mythical and partly based on the 'real' modern world – the protagonists being the demi-god children of the Greek pantheon. The *Odyssey* acts as the central source for the second book, *Percy Jackson and the Sea of Monsters*, which is an *Argonautica-cum-Odyssey*, the search for the Golden Fleece involving the Laestrygonians, Polyphemus, Circe (whose island becomes 'CC's Spa and Retreat') Scylla, Charybdis, and the Sirens.<sup>118</sup> However, whilst both of these works set themselves at arm's length from the *Odyssey* by focusing on their original characters, there is very little antagonism in terms of contradicting the plot of the Homeric poem: rather, the authors write around the *Odyssey*, forming their own events around those which took place in the Homeric narrative. Irreverence alone does not suggest necessarily hostility towards, or aggressive engagement with, the Homeric hypotext.

Antagonism towards the *Odyssey* is overwhelmingly located in issues of voice, rather than attempts to write contradictory narratives.<sup>119</sup> The protagonists of these reversions are not the traditional Greek heroes of epic: instead there is a blurring and redefining of the classical hero paradigm as part of this 'irreverent' treatment of the poem. Riordan's titular hero, for example, is powerless in the normal world – he struggles at school both socially (he moves schools frequently and finds it difficult to make friends) and academically (the eventual explanation being given that he is 'hard-wired' to read Greek, not English). Even when he is amongst his fellow demi-gods, he has to earn the respect of his peers and his father's family (the gods). As a white male,

<sup>118</sup> The first book – *Percy Jackson and the Lightning Thief* – features the 'Lotus Casino' whose inhabitants are the Lotus Eaters reconfigured, whilst the fourth book, *Percy Jackson and the Battle of the Labyrinth* features Calypso and the Cattle of Apollo.

<sup>119</sup> One exception to this is Sulari Gentill's *Chasing Odysseus*, which was published in Australia in 2011, which overtly takes issue with the *Odyssey*. It is exceptional in its lack of servility to the poem – perhaps indicative of the direction of future versions of the *Odyssey* for children.



Percy ultimately shares a privileged status with the ancient heroes of epic – yet he is still conceived as an outside voice: this is made possible by the fact that he is a child.

This marginalization of Percy is suggestive of a subaltern status. The term 'subaltern', whilst in a basic definition connoting subordination, has developed via the work of Antonio Gramsci, who used it to refer to groups subject to the hegemony of the ruling classes (1971: 52–5). This took on a particular post-colonial purchase when debated by the Subaltern Studies group of South Asian academics, who in responding to the legacy of the British Empire on the Indian subcontinent recognized that elitism and subordination can only be understood in conjunction: as this part of the thesis develops, we can see this relationship articulated in the reception of the adventures of the *Odyssey*, which were defined in children's literature in English precisely by their colonial resonance. Both Gramsci and the Subaltern Studies group were interested in how the subaltern might assert their autonomy – a feat considered impossible by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak in her seminal essay '*Can the subaltern speak? Speculations on widow sacrifice*' (1985). Spivak highlighted the essentialism of the term subaltern, and the problematic manifestation of combinations of race, class, and gender as all subaltern statuses (today broadly described as issues of intersectionality, a term originally coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989 to discuss black female marginality).

Developing Spivak's suggestion that subalterns cannot fully articulate themselves independently of a dominant means of expression, scholars of children's literature have approached children as a marginalized group. For Rose (1987) and Lesnik-Oberstein (1994), any claim by children's authors to represent a child's voice can be dismissed due to the fact that children do not write children's books, and therefore cannot have a voice in them. Yet to call children subaltern is uniquely problematic in that almost everyone has access to their own experience of being a child: however the question of access to this experience, how the child is represented and voiced, and questions concerning a presumed universality of experience means that it shares some of the fundamental issues of other subaltern groups. As Rudd 2005: 19 discusses, children do produce literature themselves (nursery rhymes, jokes, stories, plays), but because it is rarely published, it goes largely unrecognized. However, more significantly, Rudd argues that we cannot simply disregard adults as being unable to voice children, citing Spivak's argument that the presumption that only the subaltern can recognize the subaltern stakes a claim to knowledge about identity. Indeed, Spivak's claims have been

questioned also in relation to other forms of subaltern status: as Moore-Gilbert 1997: 106–7 outlines, Spivak has focused on how the contemporary female subaltern can be silenced, often overlooking the process by which they might achieve a voice of their own, and ignoring the presence of the subaltern voice where it can be heard. Adults can draw on their own memory and experience in the production of children’s literature, which lends them authenticity, but the majority of these experiences are articulated through an adult approximation of a child’s voice, even if that voice was once (how they remember) their own. Still, Rudd argues that the way in which children are not considered to have a stake in the production of children’s literature is ‘a product of the way children’s literature (in its texts and criticisms) has become institutionalized...only adults are seen to ‘authorise’ proper children’s literature’ (2005: 19). Though there are examples of collaborative fiction between adult and child authors (most notably, under pseudonyms such as Zizou Corder and Tobias Druitt), and in a post-internet age the rise of fan fiction has led to well-developed online communities, there is still a prestige given to the printed work that has been sanctioned by publishers. There is also recognition that children are aware of what is sanctioned for them – as a result, children’s authors are now wary of a didactic tone, frequently seeing their work as predominantly, or indeed, purely a recreational enterprise. Many children’s authors (at least notionally) appear to seek only the approval of their child audiences as Lamb once had,<sup>120</sup> but this does not mean that adults cannot contribute to the dissemination of literary artefacts, or their didactic interpretation, in other ways.

The last decade has seen a proliferation of reversions of the *Odyssey* for children from the perspective of characters other than Odysseus: Penelope, her maids, Odysseus’ slaves, and (coming full circle from Fénelon), Telemachus.<sup>121</sup> As part of these broadening horizons, even monstrous figures can be rehabilitated in part: Percy Jackson’s half-brother, Tyson (his name evoking a certain brutishness, perhaps suggestive of the boxer Mike Tyson), is a Cyclops – and as Tyson is an ally to Percy, this

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<sup>120</sup> Melvin Burgess discusses the negative press over his novel, *Junk*, which was one of the first novels for teenagers and older children about drug addiction – claiming that much of the press towed a moral line which was not representative of how children would understand the novel, or how many parents would actually feel about them reading it. He says that once you have decided that ‘young people can contextualize the narrative in their own right’, that you can ‘let go of any attempt to lecture them, help them, or worst of all, educate them’ (2009: 319).

<sup>121</sup> The reemergence of Telemachus as a figure of particular interest may be connected with the maturation of authors who were raised watching the cartoon series *Ulysses 31*, which saw Telemachus as a central character.

has wider implications. Polyphemus (presumably also his brother, though this is played down) is portrayed negatively for his innate qualities as much, if not more, than his external ones, whilst Tyson – who in reality, is strong but childlike, caring and protective – is given the opportunity to subvert the conventional interpretation of Cyclopes (an approach also used by Sulari Gentill in *Chasing Odysseus*). For children's authors basing their writing on the *Odyssey*, the use of these subaltern positions (female, slave, child) often acts as a tool in inviting the reader to consider the poem from these perspectives, but this is only part of their function. The inclusion of the subaltern voice in reversions of the poem is often concerned not with race but with positions of power more generally, which can be expressed in terms of the relationship between Greeks and Trojans, or male and female, but most dominantly the relationship between children and adults, and childhood and adulthood, which is formulated in children's literature. Indeed, Lovatt identifies 'intergenerational conflict' (2009: 512) as a dominant theme in Riordan's work: the whole series is plotted around the relationships between generations of gods, and between the gods and their demi-god adolescent children. This theme is reiterated across classically-engaged children's narrative, especially in reversions: in the majority of cases, the child's voice is privileged as the narrating voice, and authors exploit the subalternity of child voices to react against the traditional, authoritative, adult account of the *Odyssey*.

We can express the relationship between adult, child, and other subaltern voices in these texts using a particular vocabulary. There are several issues which need to be taken into consideration: the fluidity of the shift between voices, and the simultaneous presence of more than one voice – particularly the distinction between 'adult-author' and 'author-child' voices. Adult authors attempt to create child-orientated writing and at the same time infuse an adult discourse concerning the cultural capital of the classical past – particularly when educational discourse 'emphasizes diversity' (Lovatt 2009: 512). As recognized by Claudia Nelson,<sup>122</sup> the difference between what the author encourages children to believe ('monsters are real') and what is presented as reassuring to the adult audience ('monsters are allegorical') can be expressed simultaneously: Lovatt describes this as 'multivocality' (2009: 512). The term 'multivocality' is closely

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<sup>122</sup> Referring to paper by Claudia Nelson on Riordan's work. The proceedings are as yet unpublished, but the conference was summarized by Lovatt, and this was published the same year.

related to Bakhtin's term 'heteroglossia' – which, he uses in the specific context of the modern novel. 'Heteroglossia' is, in Bakhtin's definition:

'...another's speech in another's language, serving to express the authorial intentions but in a refracted way. Such speech constitutes a special type of *double-voiced discourse*. It serves two speakers at the same time and expresses simultaneously two different intentions: the direct intention of the character who is speaking, and the refracted intention of the author. In such discourse there are two voices, two meanings and two expressions. And all the while these two voices are dialogically interrelated, they – as it were – know about each other...Double-voiced discourse is always internally dialogized.'  
(2004: 324)

This term has already been noted by classical scholars for its relevance to the *Odyssey* – becoming apparent especially in its multi-layered or embedded stories, such as those related by Helen (her observation of Odysseus at Troy, *Od.* 4.235–64), Menelaus (his description of Helen's trickery outside the Trojan horse *Od.* 4.266–89; his tale of his own return, and that of his brother 4. 332–592), Demodocus (the song of Troy *Od.* 7.75–82, and the entrapment of Ares and Aphrodite 7.264–366), Eumaeus, (his childhood, capture and enslavement 15.390–484) and not least, Odysseus' own stories (*Od.* 9–12), reflect not only the voices of characters telling the story, and the characters within the stories, but the resonance of the poet's voice. Helen's story, for example, allows the poet's audience to access information beyond the scope of the present of the *Odyssey*, but also allows Telemachus to find out something more about his father (the purpose of his journey); Peradotto 2002: 65 argues that Menelaus' tale about Helen is tailored to his wife, as well as his guests, but also potentially signifies an anonymous, traditional narrator whose story Menelaus is appropriating; Demodocus' songs entertain but also throw the seriousness of Penelope's potential remarriage into comic relief and drive the plot by provoking Odysseus' revelation of his identity. The direct intentions of characters and refracted intentions of the poet pull in separate directions, but hold each other in balance.

The prominence of heteroglossia in the *Odyssey*, as argued by Nagy (2002: 73), and Peradotto (1990: 53n13), means the *Odyssey* is much more likely to be recognizable in Bakhtin's characterization of the novel than in his account of epic – which could explain some of its particular success as prose children's literature from amongst the

wider classical canon.<sup>123</sup> Heteroglossia also allows for the interplay between adult and child culture that children's authors invoke when creating versions or reversions of the *Odyssey* for children. Bakhtin's term gives us a specific way of describing features of reversions of the *Odyssey*: first, the relationship between child readers and adult writers. As Peradotto 2002: 63 outlines, heteroglossia is the governing force between 'centripetal' and 'centrifugal' forces. Centripetal forces exert a 'unifying, centralizing, homogenizing, and hierarchizing' force, associated with tradition and dominant political power and high literary genre; centrifugal forces are 'disunifying, decentralizing, stratifying, denormatizing' and associated with the individualistic, disempowered, the popular and low literary genres (Peradotto 2002: 63). The competing centripetal and centrifugal forces of the *Odyssey* as children's literature – epic and the 'low', prosaic culture of children's fiction, the empowered adult text and the popular appeal of the adventures, the institutionalized poem and the individual reading of recreational fiction – are made distinct within modern reversions of the poem through adult and child characters, and their relationship with the author's voice. Subaltern voices are written in these versions of the Homeric poem as a means of maintaining this *double-voiced discourse* (to please both adult and child readers). The adventure elements of the Homeric poem that act as a framework (either positive or negative) for this conflict: they permit the sense of rebellion that appeals to younger readers, whilst ensuring that radical reimaginings, and revoicings of the Homeric poem remain acceptable to adults.

The characteristics of heteroglossia outlined above may be recognised in a very basic form in earlier children's versions of the *Odyssey* (e.g. the subaltern voice of the young Telemachus and the centripetal teachings of Mentor in *The Adventures of Telemachus*), but the role of heteroglossia in governing the centrifugal and centripetal forces of the *Odyssey* as children's literature is brought to the fore in its fullest and most dynamic form by the subaltern voices of modern reversions. The presence of subaltern voices creates an expectation of a politically critical account: however, in children's narratives these subaltern voices frequently end up contributing to the 'authorisation' that Rudd describes by introducing the reader to the existing 'adult' version of the poem

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<sup>123</sup> 'Bakhtin's typologies of epic, as juxtaposed with his typologies of the novel, may indeed suit in some ways the Homeric *Iliad*, but they cannot be reconciled with the *Odyssey*, an epic that features characteristics that Bakhtin associates explicitly with characteristics of the novel, most prominently "heteroglossia" and "centrifugal" narrative. As John Peradotto notes, "I would venture to say that close readers of Homer are far more likely to recognize the *Odyssey* in Bakhtin's characterization of the novel than in his account of epic." Nagy on Bakhtin 2002: 73

in a form which privileges the adventure episodes of the poem. Locating subaltern voices in children's reversions of the poem helps us to identify the role of earlier children's versions of the *Odyssey* in the present day. Specifically, the institutionally-approved form of the adventures provides the body against which these voices can react, revealing in the process some fundamental questions about the role of these parts of *Odyssey* as children's literature.

ii. 'Cut down to size': female voices and adventure in *Ithaka*

In 2005, Adèle Geras published *Ithaka*, a critically acclaimed reversion of the events on Odysseus' home island, told both from the perspective of Penelope, and also a teenage girl called Klymene, who serves Penelope as her handmaiden, and is the fictional granddaughter of Eurykleia. *Ithaka* was not the first book for children to use a primary female voice in an engagement with the Homeric poem (it was preceded by the obscure *Aleta and the queen: a tale of ancient Greece* by the Canadian author Priscilla Galloway from 1995). However, Geras' novel is in a unique position to explicate how children's literature engages simultaneously with both gender criticism and the *Odyssey* as children's literature. Moreover, the adventures of the *Odyssey* provide the intersection for these insights: at the outset of the novel, the author is careful to establish the difference between her own work and the Homeric poem, but also explicit in her inspirations. She states:

'This book is not a version of Homer nor a retelling of the *Odyssey*, but a novel written under the influence of stories which I first read as a young child and which I've loved ever since.' (2006: Author's Note)

Those 'stories', it was revealed in an interview with the author, were Lang's *Tales of Troy and Greece*, which she was given aged six, and still kept on her shelves: as this chapter explores, the lingering influence of the masculine adventures of a century earlier proved significant for the conception of *Ithaka*.

On first encountering Geras' novel, it might be classified as feminist, because of the highlighting and interpolation of female experiences by a female author into an epic that is focused ultimately on one man. However, in order to understand the relationship between the articulation of the female voice and the adventures of the *Odyssey* in

children's literature, and the limitations of female representation, it is worth deconstructing this conception. The representation of female characters from the *Odyssey* offers obstacles to modern authors. The idea that there is a femininity underpinning the *Odyssey* is not new, for all that it is a view advanced historically by men. Samuel Butler (1897: 200) gave voice to a recurring portrayal of the Homeric poem when he argued it was the work of a female author, specifically in his view a young Sicilian girl,<sup>124</sup> an argument formed on the pervasive sense of the inferiority of the *Odyssey* to the *Iliad*, which made the idea of an essential femininity of the poem more plausible to late nineteenth-century and early twentieth-century readers than (I trust) it would be today. As part of his argument, Butler cites a comment by William Gladstone that 'domestic affection' was rare in the *Iliad*, but constitutes the main body of the *Odyssey* (harking back to the reviewers of Lamb). Odyssean women are nearly always featured in a domestic setting, or if they are found outside of the home, there continues to be a sense of providing for the *oikos*, either literally or ritually, for example, Nausicaa washing her clothes, apparently with marriage in mind in *Od.* 6.57–67.<sup>125</sup> The domesticity of women in the poem fed directly into traditional English ideals of womanhood. Butler invites comparison between ancient and modern women when he tells his reader to ask single ladies who live independently if they prefer to be served by men or women, and they shall likely state that they prefer not to have men in the house at all, like Circe or Calypso (1897: 107). The comment may be flippant, but it illustrates how womanhood, the *Odyssey* and the domestic sphere are forged tightly together via male readings of the poem up until the end of the nineteenth-century.

Female representation in the *Odyssey* raises the question of whether the poem can offer an authentic female insight: whilst studies on the issue have moved on from treating individual female characters as either 'voluptuous females' or 'industrious housewives' (terms used by F.A. Wright 1923: 10 in an attempt to reclaim Circe and Calypso), the obscuration of the majority of female voices through Odysseus' self-narration puts a certain impenetrability between the women of the adventures and the

<sup>124</sup> For more on Butler, and the false feminism suggested by his comments, see Clayton 2004: 2–4. See also Richard Bentley's *Remarks Upon the Discourse of Free-Thinking*, which was cited by Butler: 'the *Ilias* [was] made for the men, the *Odysseis* for the other sex' (1713: 18).

<sup>125</sup> The most significant exception would be the exploits of Helen as recounted in *Od.* 4.235–64; 274–89, who is where she ought not to be – but her depiction in the present of the narrative evokes a domestic harmony in full acknowledgement of her past misdemeanors, where she weaves, 'looking like Artemis', the goddess of chastity (*Od.* 4.122).

reader. In the search for a female voice, it is Penelope, the central female figure from outside the adventures, who has occupied classical studies towards the end of the twentieth century – including those by Foley (1978), Murnaghan (1987), Winkler (1990), Katz (1991) and Felson-Rubin (1994). These scholars have elevated the significance of Penelope within the poem, making the case for her agency and proactive interest in both her own reputation and that of her husband. The domestic world of the *Odyssey* has been reconsidered, with Penelope's defining work – her weaving – no longer read simply as a gender-appropriate task, but a process of conscious self-fashioning (Felson-Rubin 1994: 18–9). For the Odyssean Penelope, the process of weaving and her deception of the suitors is a means of creating her own *kleos* – which Agamemnon in *Od.* 24.196–99 suggest she will achieve by maintaining her husband's interests. Indeed, Penelope's role as weaver has seen her likened to an epic poet (Clayton 2004: 35). As Schein 1996: 30 argues, whilst Penelope is often focalized by men (notably by Agamemnon in *Od.* 24.194–8), the poem itself suggests her own mind, and a different perspective from male characters. As such, the Penelopean insights of the poem offer a plethora of creative possibilities – they are rooted in the text, which is ambiguous enough to allow diverse responses.

As more and more women themselves have been published in the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, there has been a growing division in self-association with the domestic sphere: as Theodorakopolous 2012: 150 suggests, the association between the small-scale, domestic, and the private in literature by women is today upheld as often as female authors deny it. The domestic sphere can serve as an authentic and independent female world, but also a self-limiting bracket that has been fashioned by a male-dominated society. Authors both for adults and children must orientate their work between modern attitudes to the domestic sphere and female experience, and Penelope's representation in the *Odyssey*. As the protagonist of the most renowned example, Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* (2005) relates: 'The teaching of crafts to girls has fallen out of fashion now, I understand, but luckily it had not in my day' (2005: 8). The female skills of previous generations have defined Penelope, but are no longer appropriate sole aspirations for girls. Indeed, the fact that Penelope's story is narrated from the afterlife suggests that Atwood had to take Penelope outside of her conventional domestic space, where she is fidelity personified, in order for her to divulge herself without risk. Like Tyro, who can reveal her rape by Poseidon only in the



afterlife (*Od.* 11.235–52), Penelope’s story cannot be fully recognized in the living world of the *Odyssey*:

‘The difficulty is that I have no mouth through which I can speak. I can’t make myself understood, not in your world, the world of bodies, of tongues and fingers; and most of the time I have no listeners, not on your side of the river. Those of you who catch the odd whisper, the odd squeak, so easily mistake my words for breezes rustling the dry reeds, for bats at twilight, for bad dreams.’ (2005: 4)

Even where Penelope’s voice is heard, Atwood suggests, it is misinterpreted, or shrugged off as something uncomfortable and inexpressible in reality. Penelope herself is misrepresented in the world where her name lives on. For Hall 2008: 126, Atwood had reclaimed the right for literary woman to be ‘vile’, making her Penelope disagreeable and self-occupied: antithetical to the good and faithful wife. Van Zyl Smit (2008: 401) argues that this is a subjective understanding by Hall, but Atwood’s Penelope demonstrates an ‘extrovertly lively’ character in sharp contrast with her Homeric counterpart. As with scholarly readings of the *Odyssey*, it is this focus on character and self-expression that appears to provide the most substantial basis of a claim of feminism in Atwood’s novel. Yet despite the apparent vivacity of her protagonist, Atwood – renowned as a feminist author, refuses to identify *The Penelopiad* in such terms:

‘I wouldn’t even call it feminist. Every time you write something from the point of view of a woman, people say that it’s feminist, and when you write something from the point of a man, they say ‘Why did you write it from the point of view of a man?’ You can’t actually win on those gender issues.’ (Hiller 2005)<sup>126</sup>

The promotion of the female voice and distancing from feminism by Atwood is reflective of a discomfort with the notion of ‘women’s writing’ – a label which grew out of the second-wave feminism of the 1970s and 1980s, and has become increasingly unstable as female writers have challenged the idea that commonalities in their works are linked by gender, rather than other issues. Even before child audiences come into consideration, the task of reading and writing female voices in the *Odyssey* is made

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<sup>126</sup> In the same interview, Atwood cites her own childhood reading of Andrew Lang, Grimm’s fairy tales, and the *Iliad* and *Odyssey* (the latter two studied and translated at school).

increasingly complex, if at all possible, by the politics of twenty-first century reception and representation, which cannot be pinned easily on particular treatments of person or place.

Geras' *Ithaka*, like *The Penelopiad*, was also first published in 2005: further illustrating the synchronicity of adult and children's literature.<sup>127</sup> It should not be assumed that these two authors were mutually influenced, as the two works had been conceived of independently: Geras started to draft her work in 2002 and said in a piece for *The Guardian* that she was first aware of Atwood's work in March 2004 (2005a), and that the 'powerful' and 'ever-present' nature of myths in our lives means that it is no surprise that the same topic can occupy multiple authors. Superficially at least, there are strong resemblances between the two works – the mixture of poetry and prose, and desire to tell the 'truth' of the story through female voices. However, Geras, as a children's author, faces another additional, and particular set of issues. Today's children's literature is expected to feature relatable and relevant female characters without misrepresenting the Homeric poem and the female sphere as depicted within it. In an interview for her US publisher's study guide to her work, Geras gives her response to the question of feminism in *Ithaka*:

'I sort of agree [that *Ithaka* is feminist]. It's certainly the women's viewpoint I wanted to focus on. I wanted to bring women into the foreground because in all those wars and events, they'd been sidelined and pushed out of the picture. So, yes, I was interested in their point of view. But of course you have to be historically accurate as much as possible, so there are obviously things going on, attitudes to women and girls which would shock our young people. But I guess I'd have to say I was interested in "empowering" – don't like that word, but you know what I mean – the young women in my stories.' (2005b: 5)

Atwood denies that her work is feminist in that she finds the label reductive, and Geras only tentatively concedes to the notion that *Ithaka* is a feminist work, demonstrating a similar discomfort with the term in its application to an *Odyssey* – orientated narrative. Its role as a piece of literature for young people presents obstacles that are more definitively articulated, and more restrictive than those that present in writing for adults. Geras acknowledges implicitly the limitations of the domestic

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<sup>127</sup> This chapter makes use of the 2006 republished edition by Corgi, which is more readily available. The covers are different, but the works are textually the same.

environment that is equivocated with the female sphere in Homeric poetry. More significantly, she understands this domesticity as necessary, according to the didactic impetus to root young people's first encounters with the classical world in a 'historically accurate' version of the past. Like authors before her, Geras feels a specific duty to give her young readers a context, recognizing in the same interview that many are likely to be completely unfamiliar with the Homeric world ('...all the stuff about the Gods and the Homeric background – I felt I had to put in for those children who didn't grow up with these stories from an early age' 2005b: 5).

Through this acknowledgement of the lack of prior knowledge in her audience, Geras recognizes how children's fiction is still put under greater creative limits than writers like Atwood, who are in a position to demand familiarity with the Homeric poem. Contemporary female authors for adults may choose to invoke a sense of authenticity by utilizing historical details to build their stories. However, they can also disengage from this if they choose to do so – indeed it is more common for authors to borrow the characters and relationships of the *Odyssey* and detach them from the ancient literary or historical setting, just as Atwood's Penelope narrates from the Underworld.<sup>128</sup> Moreover, adult female writers have been at liberty to refashion female characters completely: Marilynne Robinson (in her novel *Homecoming*) and Melissa Gibson (in the play *Current Nobody*), created female figures who themselves become travellers; Cox (2012) and Theodorakopoulous (2012) note, the traditions of viewing the *Odyssey* as 'feminine' and the *Iliad* as essentially 'masculine' are further destabilized in light of the work of Simone Weil, Elizabeth Cook, Alice Oswald and Madeline Miller amongst others writers for adults.<sup>129</sup> Children's authors, however, are still acutely aware of their role as a potential primary source of knowledge, and whilst they might bend or manipulate a hypotext more radically than ever before, the didactic impetus of children's literature exerts a direct pressure not to contradict it directly: as result, Geras has no radical desire to overhaul the roles of women in Ithacan society.

However, this does not mean that Geras took a conservative approach to writing around the *Odyssey*, or that she writes without reference to modern expectations of female voices in literature: rather, she anticipates the shock that will resonate with

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<sup>128</sup> For recent examples, see the 2014 volume by Gardner and Murnaghan, in particular the chapters by Pache on Melissa Gibson (pp. 44–63), Dougherty on Marilynne Robinson (pp. 281–301), and Whelan-Stewart on Gwendolyn Brooks' *The Anniad* (pp.153–72).

<sup>129</sup> See also their joint article 2013

young readers on encountering the patriarchy of the ancient Greece, and capitalizes on it. The character who enables this process is Klymene: not only can she help the young reader to become accustomed to ancient Greece as an alien culture, but enables the modern reader to learn about the experiences of ancient women as she matures. The inequality of the relative gender roles of Klymene, along with her twin brother Ikarios, Telemachus and Melantho,<sup>130</sup> helps the young reader to piece together a picture of the lives of ancient women. The child characters develop into adolescents in a shift towards more restrained gender roles: Klymene, for example, plays frequently with her brother and Telemachus early on the novel, but as she ages, spends less time with them and more time indoors with Penelope and the other maids. By setting her work in an environment that subjugates women, Geras can not only introduce the differences between the ancient and the modern worlds, but formulate characters who are sympathetic to young modern readers through their own frustrations with aspects of their environment: using an informal register, the author outlines Klymene's envy of her brother's relative freedom: ('...[she] often wished she'd been born a boy. If I had [been born a boy], I could have been a fisherman like our father and sailed away from the shore all over the ocean, and I wouldn't have to waste my time in the kitchen, staring into pots to make sure the soup doesn't burn' 2006: 11). She also outlines Telemachus' anger at his suitors and frustrations with his mother, given his own limited action ("I mean: surely there's something you can do apart from sitting here weaving all day long?" His voice rose dangerously. 'You're doing *damn all!* Anyone would think you don't care--" 2006: 196).<sup>131</sup> Already, the separation and frustration between the gendered spheres of the *Odyssey*, and their limitations, is made clear in terms of adventure and the domestic.

However, it is through Penelope that the novel comes closest to the adventures of the *Odyssey*. Penelope's uncertainty over remarriage is the crux of all action on Ithaca, and is brought into the foreground by Geras: the fates and responses of other characters depend primarily on her actions. Her conflict is openly scrutinized by many characters of the novel, in psychologically coherent terms. Penelope faces pressure from residents

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<sup>130</sup> Melantho is introduced as a peer and foil for Klymene, and eventual lover of Telemachus and the suitors. She is not hanged at the end, instead having been facially scarred during the battle in the hall, is punished by having to live without her original beauty.

<sup>131</sup> The temper and frustration of Telemachus has its origins in the *Od.* 1.355–9, where the Homeric character contradicts his mother's request for Phemius to cease playing.

(Laertes, in particular) to remarry for the stability of the island: Telemachus angrily refuses to accept the possibility of his mother remarrying, whilst Penelope herself is torn between her personal feelings regarding Odysseus and Leodes, one of the suitors. His namesake in the *Odyssey* begs for his life to be spared in *Od. 22*, and Geras appears to be inspired by the claims he makes about himself:

‘Respect me;  
for I claim that never in your halls did I say or do anything  
wrong to any one of the women, but was always trying  
to stop any one of the suitors who acted in that way.’ (*Od. 22.312–4*)

The possibility that Leodes may be speaking the absolute truth is appealing to Geras as a basis for a character, and so Leodes replaces the more overtly ambiguous Amphinomus (who is usually regarded as the best amongst the suitors for his refusal to ambush Telemachus without divine consent in *Od. 16.400–405*) in *Ithaka*. The merging of Leodes and Amphinomus becomes further apparent at the end of the novel, when Telemachus accidentally kills Leodes, who was trying to protect him (Amphinomus is killed deliberately by Telemachus in *Od. 22. 91–94*). Leodes’ claim in the *Odyssey* that he acted to protect Penelope’s interests adds another layer of complexity to Penelope’s emotions in Geras’ novel, as her Leodes is depicted as a good and kind man who may be deserving of her – and this sympathy upsets the rationale of Odysseus in the Homeric poem, who justifies killing him because of the intentions he assumes Leodes must hold (*Od. 22. 321–5*).

For Gardner and Murnaghan 2014: 2 the affirmation of Penelope’s experiences by modern authors as equivalent with that of her husband has precedence in the *Odyssey* itself where Penelope is compared to a shipwrecked sailor:

‘And as land appears welcome to men who are swimming,  
after Poseidon has smashed their strong-built ship on the open  
water, pounding it with the weight of wind and the heavy  
seas, and only a few escape the gray water landward  
by swimming, with a thick scurf of salt coated upon them,  
so welcome was her husband to her as she looked upon him,  
and she could not let him go from the embrace of her white arms.’  
(*Od. 23.233–40*)

The Homeric poem then, depicts Penelope's own experiences in the very terms of her husband's adventure (including the deliberate shipwrecking by Poseidon (*Od.* 5.365–70), swimming towards land (*Od.* 5.399), and the covering sea brine which he scrubs off (*Od.* 6.219): this gives modern authors a platform to equalise husband and wife. Modern equations of the domestic with adventure, argues Murnaghan, invite their readers to reconsider the 'Misadventure of Staying Home' (2014: 112). For the modern Penelopes who stay, home is configured in unexpected ways, in what Braund 2012: 190 describes as the 'postmodern domestication of myth'. This sees an author take familiar mythology and making it peculiar, as Braund describes, taking it: 'out of the realm of story-telling and making it strange, often, paradoxically, by making the mythical material unstrange, by giving it mundane trappings...and bringing the world and characters of myth sometimes too close for comfort'. Like *The Penelopiad*, *Ithaka* offers precisely this 'postmodern domestication' of myth: superficially, it relegates the adventures to the side-lines, instead investing in the day-to-day lives of the women and children on the island. However, in a novel that is oriented around female characters, Geras is still drawn to the adventures of the *Odyssey* as a means of differentiating gender experiences: moreover, it is through such a contrast that the female experience is imbued with value.

It is Penelope's famous weaving that gives the adventures of the *Odyssey* that are made strange through their 'mundane trappings' in *Ithaka*. Geras was particularly inspired by the poem 'Penelope' by the aptly-named Penelope Shuttle, an excerpt from which is partially quoted before the start of the book:<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>132</sup> These lines are quoted out of order by Geras, the original verses by Shuttle reading:

'All is made by the design of my hand.  
What I weave is where and how he travels.  
He sails on glittering tides I weave.  
This skein is his hero's skin.

It is I who weave the web of spears.

Legend diminished me to wife  
of the house, subject to suitors  
and son: but my husband's life  
hung from the thread coaxing through my fingers...' (1999: 14).

‘...my husband’s life,  
hung from a thread, coaxing through my fingers.

All is made by the design of my hand  
What I weave is where and how he travels.  
He sails on glittering tides. I weave.’ (2006)

These lines decided how Geras would handle the experiences of Odysseus before his arrival later on in the novel: they are taken quite literally into Penelope’s hands. The idea that the shroud could bear these images is one speculated by classicist Barbara Clayton in *A Penelopean Poetics: reweaving the feminine in Homer’s Odyssey* (2004), who argues that the lack of detail of what ought to be a complex piece of weaving is left deliberately open by the poet. As the shroud is woven and then unpicked every night, there is perhaps little reward in outlining the design, unlike the adventures of the *Odyssey*, which have been crafted to stand the test of time – ‘a possession forever’ (to borrow Thucydides 1.22.4). As a mirror to the Homeric poem, Clayton argues Penelope’s weaving is a ‘text of alterity’, far removed from the stories of men, and this act of creation results in a product which is different and ‘unmistakeably feminine’ (2004: 83–4). However, Geras is writing a reception, a reversion: as a result, she can vocalize the hypothetical, creating a textile that asserts a feminine independence but is ultimately superseded by the male narrative.

Geras reinterprets Shuttle’s premise in the first chapter, where the text slips into Penelope’s inner monologue for the first time as she communicates with a disguised Athena:

*‘Be brave, says the owl, or maybe Penelope hears the words in her head. It is looking at her out of its amber eyes. She says, ‘Will my husband come back to me?’ The owl steps on to the sill. Penelope hears its answer as though the words are being spoken in her head: His life is in your hands, Penelope. It is bound up in the threads you have tied to your loom, and as long as you are here, unchanged and unchanging, he will come to no harm. Pallas Athene will guide him home. Penelope closes her eyes, dizzy with a mixture of relief and anguish.*

*'I'll never stop weaving,' she says to the owl, 'but how cruel of Pallas Athene to lay the burden of Odysseus' life on me! What if I should fail?'* (2006: 7)

Athene sets Penelope's weaving, representing her fidelity, as her own personal challenge to be reckoned with: the process of weaving provides psychological insight into Penelope's struggle with both the literal and figurative tasks set by Athene, yet this is about more than Penelope's fidelity. Odysseus' survival depends on Penelope's continuation of her weaving, and narratologically speaking, it does – for the young reader needs Penelope to complete her weaving to have the full picture of the counter-narrative of the events of the *Odyssey* itself. The significance of Odysseus' adventures and of Penelope's weaving is formally signified to the young reader in the register that is used specifically for these weaving passages, as it is indicated to the young reader that this is where the boundaries of the Odyssean narrative, rather than *Ithaka* lie. These boundaries separate not only male experience from female domesticity, but also an implied difference between the patriarchal ancient hypotext and modern female interpolations. When taking into account that Geras remarks in her Preface that this work is 'not a version of Homer', it does not mean that she does not retell the narrative: rather, for the purposes of instructing young children, it is made clear than her version is far from definitive.

As Penelope's task begins, the distinction between her life and Odysseus' travels is expressed physically. The introduction of each weaving passage follows some point of tension in the narrative, or heightened state of emotion for Penelope – the first comes after the death of Antikleia, who drowns herself with the aid of Athene out of heartbreak for her son, which leads Penelope to reflect on her own conflict about waiting for Odysseus. She enters a trance-like state:

*'Penelope stood and stared at the threads stretched tight on the frame, and after a time her eyes grew misty and she felt in her fingers what the colours should be; where the shuttle needed to go. She knew then how the work would be done. Her hands moved as though they did not belong to her and the threads began to weave more than pictures. They wove a story.'* (2006: 47)

Each of the weaving passages is introduced with language that slips into the passive – normally focusing on 'her hands' (2006: 47, 75) or 'the threads' (2006: 117, 266) which



become personified, independent of Penelope. Each introductory passage ends with a variation on ‘They wove a story’ – ‘The threads will tell the story’ (2006: 117), ‘She must weave the story, it must be woven’ (2006: 204). This deliberate repetition echoes common Homeric epic formulae, and is also suggestive of the ritualism of extended type-scenes. Though Homeric scenes of weaving are not categorized as type-scenes by Arend (1933) or Edwards (1992), they feature broadly similar patterns in the description of the act of weaving (e.g. ‘she went up and down a great design on the loom’ (ἴστων ἐποιχομένης μέγαν ἄμβροτον), Circe in *Od.* 10.222; ‘she went up and down the loom and wove with a golden shuttle’ (ἴστων ἐποιχομένη χρυσεῖη κερκίδ’ ὕφαινευ), Calypso in *Od.* 5.62), and the detail given to the loom (‘such as the goddesses have’ (οἶα θεάων) *Od.* 10.223) or other tools, such as the golden shuttle of Calypso (*Od.* 5.62) and Helen’s golden distaff (χρυσῆν τ’ ἡλακάτην, *Od.* 131), silver basket (ὑπόκυκλον...ἀργύρεον, *Od.* 4.131-2), and wool (νήματος ἀσκητοῖο, *Od.* 4.134; ἰοδνεφῆς εἶρος, *Od.* 4.135). Using these Odyssean signifiers, Geras relays to her young audience that the narrative is about to shift away from the female voiced narrative, which has taken a normative position, to something different. As the novel progresses, these phrases also allow the young reader to anticipate the half-dreamt, colourful passages that follow – allowing the reader to experience Homeric mechanisms without reading the *Odyssey* itself.

The marked change in register that follows sees the narrative slip from prose into a mixture of verse and stream-of-consciousness, formatted distinctly, and reflecting upon the tensions in the main narrative. In these scenes of weaving, Geras covers the now canonical essentials of the adventures: Cyclops, Circe, the Sirens, Scylla and Charybdis, and Calypso – touching only on the most fantastic parts of the *Odyssey*, as well as the meeting with Antikleia in the Underworld (a continuity which links to her earlier appearance in the opening of the novel). The vivacity of the imagery, along with the unusual typesetting and stream-of-consciousness imagery of the threads in movement are designed to be alien and unpredictable. In one example, Penelope wakes from a dream where she imagines a bed that is not her own, and the smell of a fragrant air. She wonders if Odysseus still remembers her and her affections and decides to weave: ‘Don’t think of the dream, she told herself. Think of the threads. They will show

me what I want to know. They may reveal what I dread, perhaps, but I cannot stop my hands from moving on the loom' (2006: 117). The passage that follows then depicts Odysseus and Circe:

*'where is the black ship? quiet on the shore hot flames  
food more darkness on the water stars out in the sky*

*there is purple there is milky white  
no blue orange hot as flames warp weft  
black and brown and spotted  
striped and grey yellow for the eyes*

Here is a garden full of animals.  
But look more closely. Look into the eyes  
of wolves and bears and foxes; pigs and dogs.  
Under the fur, in unfamiliar shapes  
creatures who once were men are bound: entranced,  
bewitched, enthralled, transformed by sorcery.  
The enchantress, Circe, waved her magic wand:  
made for herself her own menagerie.

*white red flames of hair  
back forth lying sleeping dreams forth back  
gold and red weft warp white and dreaming blue*

He lies asleep in Circe's soft white arms.  
Her hair like amber winds about his throat.  
Her breath moves like a zephyr on his face.  
Pillows are soft. Covers are smooth and warm.  
A thousand roses make the air so sweet  
that breathing it brings on a swoon of lust.  
Odysseus turns; drowns in another kiss.  
Tides of this woman close above his head.

*red lips on his weft warp thin black line for the ship  
sailing again back and forth weft and warp'.*

(2006: 117-8)

The lines of weaving serve in part to suggest the gaps between verses: the men's ship arriving on the shore, the 'hot flames' and 'food' hint at the stag prepared on the beach (*Od.* 10.176-84), the 'purple' chair coverings in Circe's house (*Od.* 10.352), the 'milky white' flower of the moly given by Hermes (*Od.* 10.304-5), the 'black brown and spotted' and 'yellow for the eyes' hint at the colouring of the wolves and lions enchanted in the garden (*Od.* 10.212-3), whilst the final 'sailing again' belies Odysseus' eventual

departure from the island. However, the verses between the stream of consciousness lines, whilst more coherently recounting some of the events of the *Odyssey*, are marked by Penelope's state of mind. As she imagines Odysseus with another woman, she uses the implied shipwreck, with 'tides' closing over his head to illustrate the potential loss of her husband through adultery. Whilst this is her fear, for Odysseus, who 'drowns' in Circe's kisses, it will be a real shipwreck that poses the greatest practical threat to his return to his wife, having claimed the lives of all the other men except him (*Od.* 12.403–15). Geras manages to set Penelope's and Odysseus' experiences at odds, whilst remaining sympathetic to both.<sup>133</sup> Similarly, when Penelope asks herself if anyone has guessed her feelings for one of the suitors, the passage concerning the Sirens relays the following:

'They sing love songs, they sing songs of death.  
They sing the darkest secrets of each heart  
and the desires no one dares confess.' (2006: 205)

The Sirens reflect not only Odysseus' longing for knowledge, but also Penelope's unspoken love for Leodes. The projection of Penelope's feelings onto the loom, whilst outlining the experience of her husband is partly to draw tension and uncertainty into their eventual reunion, yet the fact that Penelope appears to be able to weave Odysseus' own stories, and preserve him as a result of weaving them, also hints at their *homophrosyne* – preserving their relationship and 'sympathy of mind', as detailed in the *Odyssey* (6.181).

The heteroglossic nature of Penelope's weaving becomes amplified the end of the novel, as the narrative moves closer towards Odysseus' restoration to his palace. The further into the novel, the less Penelope is able to weave. At first, Penelope considers this development a bad portent, imagining that the first instance of her inability to weave can only suggest the death of her husband:

'Something was amiss. Penelope sat at the loom and stared at it...There is nothing in my head, Penelope thought, and shivered. Nothing. Every story, every picture, had gone. Where to? And why? She closed her eyes, praying that the colours would appear there, telling her which of them needed to be threaded on to the loom.

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<sup>133</sup> This also helps to allay in part concerns of Odysseus' infidelity, by making it an unwilling act.

Nothing. Black and blank and empty. Did this mean her husband was dead? She picked up a skein of black and held it to the light. Not this, she thought. Not black. I refuse to admit that black is the colour the loom is waiting for. Red then? No, not red.

One after another, she held each colour up and considered it. I don't want to weave, she thought. How can that be? Weaving is like breathing to me, and yet if I could walk out of this room and away from my handiwork, I would. I wish, she thought, that I could run away, like Telemachus. How comfortable it would be to sit at Eumaeus' fireside and talk about nothing. Or Leodes. She could almost hear Aphrodite speaking to her: *Life is short and pleasure is all there is. Go with Leodes. Love him. Forget Odysseus.* We could flee to his island on the ship. I could leave them all behind me. Leave everything: the palace, the suitors, Telemachus, Laertes, this bed that has bound me to the earth of Ithaka. I could run away...I am tired of waiting for something that is not going to happen. There is nothing in my head: no pictures left to weave. What can that mean but my husband is dead?' (2006: 314-5)

The end of the adventures as told in Penelope's weaving marks the gradual restitution of the male narrative within Geras' novel. The protection and stability provided by Athene, who inspired Penelope's weaving as well as protecting Odysseus, is threatened at this point: the lack of images, and the inability to read intuitively the appropriate colours for the scenes indicating the uncertainty of events for the remainder of the narrative. Whilst the reader is supposed to be reassured by the unsuitability of the black skein, seeing this as an indication that Odysseus will not die on his return to the house, for Penelope, her inability to weave undermines her control of the situation. If her ability to weave is 'like breathing', then Penelope herself is commensurate with her weaving until this very moment, where she speculates on a life outside of the *Odyssey*. Moreover, this life is one that contradicts her renowned fidelity, where she full-heartedly chooses another suitor (a decision made even more explicit in 2006: 356 (I've chosen Leodes') the night before the feast which leads to the battle in the hall as recounted in *Od.* 22). When she ceases to weave, this gives her the liberty to imagine a life where she is not 'bound' to the marital bed that proves to be the crux of the eventual reunion with her husband, but also this particular loom and its story. At this crucial point of the narrative, Geras toys with the idea of a radical new departure for Penelope: but like the shroud, her story is not yet finished.

Despite the attention given to Penelope's weaving, the suitors never catch her: rather, she calls the contest of her own accord, precisely because she has made her own

decision about who she will marry, and it serves as a distraction so that she can escape with Leodes. However, as the narrative moves towards the close, this agency is eroded, and Penelope's own voice starts to fall apart:

'I am unraveling. Just like the shroud I've been making for so long, every night I feel as though parts of me are being pulled away, undone. Soon there will be nothing left, and I'll be glad to be done with a life that's become harder and harder.... Her hunger for Leodes was like a strand of scarlet wool. I should pull at it and throw it away, she said to herself. It colours everything it touches. Pale yellow, that's pain, and there's mauve for devotion to duty, and this white, why that's the hope I still have that I may see my husband again.' (2006: 353-4)

Penelope has become the shroud: now her husband has returned, the responsibility for his story, and hers, is no longer in her hands. Outside of the female creation act of weaving, Geras sees Penelope as 'pulled away, undone' as Odysseus' actions begin to take control of the story. The scenes of the adventures have dissolved into an incomplete picture, the whole hinted at by the fixed threads of the past that remain. As Penelope makes one final attempt to weave, she turns to the frame:

'Empty. No pictures. Nothing. Nothing on the frame and nothing in her head but memories she could never, ever speak of.' (2006: 400)

The adventures have ended, and so has Penelope's weaving. On one hand, the memories that remain repressed are to be understood specifically as those of Leodes, but the dissolution of the pictures and the detail therein reflects the dissolving of Penelope's voice itself, as the existing masculine epic prevents the truth from being remembered. The scarlet thread, along with the pale yellow, has disintegrated: the white and mauve threads cannot make a full picture in themselves. The Penelope who *is* her weaving is undone by the very story she helped to create: only the sanctioned male narrative remains.

In *Ithaka*, the presentation of the adventures of Odysseus as the subject of Penelope's weaving poses a challenge to the *Odyssey*. This is apparent through the way in which Geras' narrative challenges the privilege afforded to memory in the Homeric poem. Canevaro 2014 argues that whilst women weave in the Homeric poems partly for the purposes of memory (e.g. Helen giving Telemachus a gift 'as a testament to the

hands of Helen' in *Od.* 15.126), the longevity of these items is incomparably shorter than objects made by men. She argues that the ephemerality of objects made by women, means that they are 'flawed memorializers', just as humans themselves are. Within the Homeric poems, she argues, it is only via epic that memories can be truly preserved. However, in *Ithaka*, Geras suggests that it is epic, as a quintessentially male medium, that has failed memory: the images woven on the loom tell Odysseus' story but not the suppressed truth of Penelope's torn feelings that has been surpassed by the lasting account of epic. Moreover, this truth is a distinctly feminine one. Only the weavers – Penelope and her assistant Klymene, and to a lesser extent, Melantho – know the full account of what happened on Ithaca: these female and child subaltern voices having been erased from history by the dominant masculine tale. The adventures may have been commemorated by female hands, but most of their fingerprints have been eradicated.

Instead, the contrast between the Odyssean adventures and Penelope's personal response is an argument for an alternative memorialization of both Penelope and the Homeric poem. As Mueller 2007: 337 has argued, Homeric women remember differently to men, through a 'durable state of being' rather than individual successive acts. Geras gives greater prominence to this female way of remembering through her conscious reduction of the adventures, as she acknowledges:

'...recounting those famous *Odyssey* stories as small pictures on a loom kind of reduced their importance. Cut them down to size.' (2005b: 6)

Yet despite Geras' deliberate attempts to reduce the significance of these episodes, they are, somewhat paradoxically, the only way in which the female experience is not upstaged – by making the adventures part of their lives. *Ithaka* – because of its creative nature – offers a more positive outcome than feminist studies of the *Odyssey*, which Doherty 1995: 48 argues fail to move 'outside the androcentric frame'. Readings which 'maximize' Penelope, she argues, are dependent on proving that: 'Penelope is *like Odysseus, or like the (male) poet*: she is positively valued to the extent that she is seen as sharing the *mētis* and the covert control of events that characterize the male personae who narrate and/or focalize the epic as a whole'. Geras' woven adventures are not 'unmistakeably feminine', as Clayton suggested, but they do form a 'text of alterity': one

which acknowledges the power of the male narrative but offers a Penelope who is her own, fully-rounded person, independent of both Odysseus and the Homeric poet.

Lest we forget that *Ithaka* is a work aimed at a young readership, the process of understanding this new Penelope is focalized by Klymene. This is an ambitious and experimental reversion of the *Odyssey*, and it demands a lot of its young readership: Klymene's presence offers subtle guidance and interpretation of the events of the novel. The woven adventure passages anchor the narrative in the *Odyssey*, and secure the way events will play out after Odysseus' return. They offer a certain security in a narrative that is concerned with the anxieties of not only Penelope, but those of Klymene, who voices the questions that a modern child reader might have. After Melanthe tells Klymene that Penelope has feelings for Leodes, Klymene reflects:

'It wasn't true. It couldn't be. Penelope would never, never be disloyal to Odysseus. She hated all of them, all the men who'd come to seek her hand in marriage. How many times had she told Klymene so?

*Not all of them*, said a small voice somewhere deep in Klymene's head. *She doesn't hate them all. She likes Leodes. You know that. Why don't you admit it to yourself? They're not all the same, not at all. Leodes isn't a bad person. And remember how she looked on the night when he first came to Ithaka and feasted at her table? Remember how her body leaned towards his?* (2006: 187-8)

Klymene struggles to come to terms with Penelope's relationship with Leodes, but reminds herself of the psychological and emotional reasoning behind it: drawing an extended picture of the external and internal realities, between the 'story' of the *Odyssey* that promotes the idealised Penelope and the 'reality' of life of Ithaca. As such, she fills out the picture for the young reader, who might be finding it difficult to know how to respond to an ambiguously-drawn Penelope. Klymene's own childish impressions are attributions made by the Homeric poem, but personalized by Geras. Klymene's filial relationship with Penelope, who has helped raise her and her brother since they were orphaned at a young age, means that she has particularly high expectations of her:

'Perhaps because her mistress was like a mother to her in many ways, she needed her to be more than other women – better, more loyal, so faithful to a missing husband that she remained chaste forever, long after the time when anyone else would have taken another man into her bed.' (2006: 188)

Klymene's idealisation of Penelope stems from the commendations of Agamemnon and the suitors in the *Odyssey* (*Od.* 11.445–6; *Od.* 2.117–22): but this praise delivered by men about Penelope becomes the childish admiration of a parental figure. The masculine, Odyssean conception of Penelope becomes an underdeveloped understanding through Klymene. In acknowledging this, and coming to terms with the earlier rationale of why Penelope might express a preference for one of the suitors, Klymene demonstrates a maturity that denotes her own movement away from childhood. Her ability to ask herself questions ('*What about Odysseus?* Klymene wanted to ask. *What about him?*' 2006: 272) before being able to converse discreetly with Penelope on the subject of Leodes indicates her newfound ability to operate in adult matters. Yet by letting the question of Odysseus linger, Geras is acutely aware that despite their superficially 'minimalized' role in this work, that the adventures are the means by which the *Odyssey* survives – and in particular, through children.

This idealisation of Penelope by Klymene foreshadows a more direct confrontation of the issue of the role of children's literature in promoting the *Odyssey* in a conversation between Athene and Penelope:

'You have been more faithful than any husband has a right to demand. Years and years went by before you even looked at another man. Your weaving has kept him alive. The stories you have told in your work.'  
'This is no story, Goddess. It's my life. It's what I live every day. Why are you speaking of stories, as though what I'm going through is some sort of... amusement for children?' (2006: 374–5)

Geras has woven a doubly-voiced narrative, between the Homeric poem and 'reality', as voices by Athene and Penelope respectively. Penelope has the opportunity to critique the Homeric version of herself directly, recognizing that the 'stories' – the adventures of the *Odyssey* as told in her weaving – are not representative of her. Penelope's comment that these 'stories' are some 'amusement for children' – is multi-faceted: first, it speaks directly to the modern reader, who is presumed to have been reading primarily for entertainment; second, the negatively charged invocation of stories for children represents the wider adult discourse of children's culture as 'inferior'. Geras acknowledged that the fantastic elements are the central draw of the *Odyssey* for young readers, keeping Odysseus alive (in an interview, she called the poem '...full of monsters and storms and all the ingredients kids love. That's why it's been retold for children so



often' 2005b: 5).<sup>134</sup> Whilst this pull was true for Geras herself upon reading Lang as a girl, by having Penelope vocalize the untruth of the 'stories' of the *Odyssey* and mock the adult association of the adventures of Odysseus with children's culture, Geras acknowledges the antagonism traditionally found between adults and children in children's literature, suggesting that if young readers were given more credit, that they too could appreciate stories beyond the narrative of the *Odyssey*. Penelope ultimately fails to recognize the concern and understanding shown by Klymene, and the other young characters of the poem – and after all, it is adults such as herself who have decided that Penelope's story is precisely not one 'for children'.

The novelty of Geras' narrative was made possible by a perceived or imagined fallibility of the *Odyssey*: the reimagining of the *Odyssey* from a female perspective is inherently a direct confrontation of the male, adventure-centric narrative. Continuing from *Ithaka*, the final section explores how the role of the adventures of the *Odyssey* as the embodiment of authority transcends issues of gender, instead reflecting on the subaltern status of the child. Other twenty-first century reversions, which have subversively deconstructed the male voice from within, use the adventures of the *Odyssey* to destabilize the poem using the dynamic between child and adult characters. These texts question Odysseus' role as a parent; as a Greek; and the authority of the poem itself more explicitly than ever before: such an approach is – deliberately – only partially effective.

iii. His master's voice: Odysseus, parental figures, and adventure in *Torn from Troy* and *King of Ithaka*.

Canadian authors Patrick Bowman and Tracy Barrett are among the most recent authors to write a work for a young readership that threatens to disrupt the *Odyssey*. Bowman's *Torn from Troy* series – *Torn from Troy: Odyssey of a Slave, Book I* (2011); *Cursed by a Sea God: Odyssey of A Slave, Book II* (2012); and *Arrow Through the Axes:*

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<sup>134</sup> Geras also notes the influence of the American author, Nathaniel Hawthorne, whose *A Wonder-Book for Girls and Boys*, and its sequel, *Tanglewood Tales*, retold several Greek myths and was hugely successful on both sides of the Atlantic: 'Then there was *Tanglewood Tales* by Nathaniel Hawthorne. When I went to school, we still did Latin, for which I'm endlessly grateful. We did *Aeneid: Book II* by Virgil, which is basically about the sack of Troy.... so I've known the stories all my life, practically' (Sullivan 2005: 5). As well as *Troy* and *Ithaka*, Geras has also published *Dido*, which takes on the *Aeneid* in a similar fashion. Her study of the *Aeneid* would contain either the source material, or pointers to it, for all three novels.

*Odyssey of A Slave, Book III* (2014) – charts the *Odyssey* through the eyes of a fifteen year-old Trojan boy called Alexi who becomes a slave on Odysseus’ ship, whilst Barrett’s *King of Ithaka* (2010) focuses on Telemachus’ travels. The trope of adventure as the facilitator of male maturation was well-established by Fénelon and Lamb, and the *Bildungsroman* or *Entwicklungsroman* model speaks not only to Telemachus’ education by Athena in the *Odyssey*, but to children’s literature more broadly. However, in the recent development of young adult literature, these models are newly configured, as Roberta Seelinger Trites notes in her authoritative *Disturbing the Universe: Power and Repression in Adolescent Literature* (2000: 10–20). Adolescents, Trites argues: ‘do not achieve maturity in a YA novel until they have reconciled themselves to the power entailed in the social institutions with which they must interact to survive’ (2000: 20). In the *Odyssey*, Athena’s provision of the opportunity for Telemachus to gain his first *kleos* (a ploy she reveals in *Od.* 13.422) through both his own travels, and through meeting his father’s comrades, embeds him in Homeric masculine society; both ancient and modern texts rely on, as Clarke 1999: 139 describes, ‘not simply a schooling or an education...not something taught but something imparted; it is an experience’. Yet unlike the *Odyssey*, a quintessential feature of the young adult novel is an overt tension between the young protagonist and the acceptance of adult institutions. Reynolds 2007: 79, summarizing Trites, describes this paradoxical strain as follows:

‘... on the one hand it is understood to be a literature of breaking away and becoming, on the other, it is a literature of control and conformity, preparing the way for successive generations of teenagers to take up established roles in the existing social order.’

In these Odyssean reversions, this tension is most commonly expressed between child and adult characters. In Geras’ *Ithaka*, the markers between female and male narratives were relatively clearly drawn, but there was an additional tension between adult and child perspectives: narratives that explore a male child’s voice take this conflict of conformity more literally and it is dealt with more overtly. The acceptance of the patriarchal nature of ancient Greek society by these authors means that the young male protagonists can imitate or participate fully in the adventures of the *Odyssey* (and indeed, they have a progenitor in Telemachus) – but this acceptance is driven also by the associations between masculinity, adventure and the *Odyssey* forged in the

nineteenth century. By exploiting the parent-child relationship, these authors echo a model that Petropoulos 2011: 105 notes is present in the Homeric poem itself: 'In Homer, it is the connection with a paternal model and in general with the model of his forebears that eventually makes a boy into a man. If the child is unconnected to his father, he is by definition νήπιος, 'childish'. The connection between adults and children, both in and outside of these fictions, reveals the continuing role of the nineteenth century Romantic *Odyssey* in modern literature.

In Bowman's *Torn from Troy* series, Alexi's Trojan nationality and slave status put him not only in a disenfranchised position politically, but as a narrator, as this places him as opposition to the traditional protagonist, Odysseus. The encouragement of identification between child protagonist and child readers means that at least initially, the reader is encouraged to view Odysseus in the same light as Alexi, and to trust that Alexi's version of events is correct. The first five chapters outline the fall of Troy from within the city walls, the searching of Troy for prisoners, the capture of Alexi and the apparent death of his sister, Melantha.<sup>135</sup> Bowman is careful to contextualize Alexi's hate of the Greeks as sympathetic, describing the practical impact that the Greek troops have had on the city:

'The beach had been covered with ships ever since I could remember, stretching away down the coast...A few other street kids – the war had made a lot of orphans – joined us.' (2011: 17)

Bowman attempts to imbue his narrative with realism – collective experience and the quotidian – a centrifugal, 'low' pull commonly associated with children's literature. Yet, as this process of establishing life in the Trojan War begins, Bowman's differentiation between his protagonist and the Greek invaders is emphasized, then cut short in the same sentence:

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<sup>135</sup> The name being borrowed 'from a minor character' (Monday, July 1, 2013 'Where do you get those names from?') according to Bowman's website, though he acknowledges this might cause a problem in writing the female servant in Ithaca in the third book (eventually the Melanthe who scolds Odysseus in *Od.* 18.320–36; 19.65–9 appears briefly as a nameless maid in 2014: 171–2). Bowman writes in several 'new' female characters who appear very briefly throughout the novel, but his decision to write a 'realistic' adventure is clearly one which has decided that male characters must take priority – neither Bowman nor Geras, despite the postmodern possibilities of writing myth, find it acceptable to write in a female protagonist on Odysseus' ship out of a sense of authenticity.

‘Ten years of war couldn’t really be over just like that. Could it? I shivered. I hated the war for what it had done to my family, hated the Greek barbarians who had started it, even though I was part Greek myself.’ (2011: 17)

Though Alexi self-identifies as Trojan, the fragmentation in his ethnicity (his grandmother was Greek) becomes increasingly significant. On one level, Alexi’s ability to speak Greek adds a certain historical authority. Bowman peppers his narrative with transliterated Greek, emphasizing the foreignness of the Greeks, and adding an edge of authenticity by replicating exactly what is heard by the protagonist – both from a point of adaptation (this was Homer’s language) and historically (‘this was what the Greeks spoke’), despite the temporal distance between the Homeric heroes, and Homer himself.<sup>136</sup> Yet the open declaration of Alexi’s hatred of the Greeks means there is a lack of resolution between the two sides of his identity, despite what appears to be an outright dismissal.

One effect of Alexi’s dual ancestry is that from the earliest part of the trilogy, the narrative is not simply a question of sides, or a totally antagonistic reinterpretation of the *Odyssey*. Characters can be judged on their own merits, rather than their nationality: even though he ‘hated the Greek barbarians’, Alexi says that he ‘hated the war’ first, and combined with his ancestry, this suggests that his views are not driven by nationalism, but rather a sense of humanity. This is supported by moving scenes that Bowman saves until after the revelation of Alexi’s heritage:

‘Every few paces we had to stop to drag bodies out of the way of the wheel. Many of the bodies were men in bits of Trojan armour, their gaping wounds a sign that they’d died in battle. At least as many, mostly older men, wore the clothes they’d had on for the festival. Some had been cut down as they ran or backed against a wall and executed, but many still lay where they’d passed out in the street after last night’s party, stabbed in their sleep.’ (2011: 35)

The passage reminds us that modern authors can speak didactically through child characters as well as adult ones. This is the first description which visualizes the

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<sup>136</sup> Bowman notes in the glossary of Book II (2013: 201) that there would have been a difference between Greek and Trojan languages, which is a theme throughout (he calls the Trojan language ‘Anatolean’). But he does not make a temporal distinction in the Greek. There is also a hidden reward for the reader, when they understand some of the transliteration – Bowman frequently uses insults based around *kopros*, *su’eromenos* and *kuna*, which provides some of the thrill of swearing but without the cultural force of a straight English translation.

human impact around the city as a result of the war, and it is important that this comes only after Alexi has established his dual ancestry: in effect, this is a step away from the partial stance we might expect from his character, as it allows him to assume a more 'authentic' role as narrator. McCallum 1999: 142 describes a strong tradition of 'intrusive' narrators, who draw attention to their story-telling function 'to validate the status of their narrative as 'truth' (1999: 142). Whilst not a third-person narrator, Alexi as an 'intrusive' original voice in the Odyssean narrative is positioned as an eyewitness to events by Bowman, lending him this truthful quality.

However, there is much to question in the picture of Alexi as an 'authentic' average Trojan boy-turned-slave. His ability to speak Greek protects him: when the Greeks capture him, Alexi's linguistic abilities attract Odysseus' attention, giving him the choice to be a slave for him, rather than the unpleasant Ury (Eurylochus). Odysseus' good judgment is compounded later, when Odysseus discovers that Alexi's father was a famous (and impartial) Trojan healer – he sees the benefit of having Alexi on board, and his ability to treat his men: Alexi is declared *hagios*, and given preferential treatment on the voyage. The term *hagios* is not Homeric, but instead from Biblical Greek, referring to the idea of being set apart for God: the term does appear in Herodotus 2.41 referring to a temple, but Bowman's use of this term is certainly more suggestive of the protection and reverence offered to people under the terms of reference in the Bible. Despite his newfound slave status, Alexi is quickly identified as being distinct, and implicitly more important than the other slaves captured, which affects the sense of representative authority that the reader can imbue him with. As McCallum notes, 'In experimental fictions, narratorial and authorial intrusions often function quite overtly to position readers in relation to a text' (1999: 143). Alexi's dual ethnicity reflects his ability to communicate both 'sides' of the narrative (Greek and Trojan) to the reader, but this dual heritage has a further heteroglossic purpose: whilst he vehemently expresses his hatred for the Greeks, Alexi's acknowledgement of his ethnicity brings him close to his closest adult presence throughout the series, Odysseus. A narrative from Alexi's perspective might appear to threaten the *Odyssey* because of the possible challenge to the events of the poem posed by a subaltern Trojan child, yet the early acknowledgement of Alexi's Greek ethnicity provides an opening that allows Bowman to develop both Alexi's and the reader's relationship with Odysseus in a positive light.

Odysseus and his adventures are the factors that subdue the tensions raised by Alexi. The assumption that the reader will align himself or herself with Alexi means that the relationship between a character called Lopex and Alexi is a central part of orientating the reader in relation to the *Odyssey*. In his first appearance, we meet Odysseus by the pseudonym of 'Lopex' ('Fox' from 'ἄλωπηξ') – a modern, Aesopic take on πολύτροπος that didactically points to his character. 'Lopex' is how Odysseus is referred to almost entirely throughout the series. The very few times he is called Odysseus are superficially explanatory, but revealing in the process. The first sees Alexi discuss his new master with a fellow newly-enslaved Trojan:

“We’ve been fortunate. At least with Odysseus as our master, the archers won’t use us as human targets.”  
Odysseus? I looked up. “I thought they called him Lopex.”  
The older man shook his head. “That’s just a nickname. His men have called him that for as long as I remember. That is to say,” he added, “since the Greeks first attacked us ten years ago.”  
I stared at him. Back in Troy, even I’d heard the name of Odysseus the trickster. It was said he told two lies with every breath. Then again, what I’d heard about the other Greek commanders was worse.’  
(2011: 58)

The pseudonym of Lopex invites the young reader to judge Odysseus independently of what they may know about him already, whilst explicitly referencing his traditional reputation from both within and outside of the *Odyssey* as a deceitful trickster. At the same time, despite these qualities (which Alexi has learnt from the Trojan awareness of him) Odysseus is still characterized as being relatively benign, compared to some of his compatriots. From their first meeting, Lopex, though cold and detached, is never presented as innately cruel – the main antagonist is Eurylochos, who is ‘hairy and unkempt, with dark, angry eyes’ (2011: 32). Though Alexi wishes to distance himself from his master, Lopex’s men ‘have called him that for as long as I remember’: the nickname is not one given by the outsider Alexi to a man he does not know, but an insider nickname which Alexi adopts, rather than choosing a nickname of his own. Whilst Alexi’s words openly suggest hostility, Bowman’s advocacy of Odysseus is also present: already then, there are foundations for a relationship between Alexi and Lopex. As the trilogy progresses, the usage of this nickname will reflect Alexi’s own shift in attitude to Odysseus: in the second book, Bowman reminds the reader of Odysseus’

true name, and Alexi reveals that ‘calling him Lopex also made it easier to forget that he was a war leader...’ (2013: 3). This use of the nickname distances Odysseus from his past actions and reputation, and whilst at this stage Alexi is not entirely reconciled to his new master, it allows him psychologically to handle the admiration that he develops for his new master across the first two books. As the relationship between these two characters unfolds, we can see there is a specific dynamic which is commonly found across young adult literature which characterizes their relationship: that of the child and the parent-figure.

The adventures of the *Odyssey* begin, and after the escape from the Ciconians, the ship is caught in a storm (based on *Od.* 9.67–73 ‘Cloud-gathering Zeus drove the North Wind against our vessels...’), where Alexi can admire the maritime skills of Lopex when he directs the crew to row in the opposite direction to prevent the ship sinking. After the point of crisis, Alexi reflects on Lopex:

‘Lopex stood on the forward deck watching the rowers, his arms folded, his sea balance superb. From the side, with the wind whipping his beard off his lantern-square jaw, he looked a bit like my father. I took a deep breath. “Sir?” He turned, a scowl just starting across his face, and I plunged ahead. “Um, nice trick with the oars.” His expression didn’t change, but after a moment he nodded, very slightly.’ (2011: 102–3)

The invocation of Alexi’s father – who died near the end of the war – is the first indication of a preoccupation with seeking some kind of adult approval. This is not the only time that Alexi directly compares Lopex to his father: their relationship begins to develop when Lopex hoists Alexi up onto the sleeping Cyclops so that he can be the one to thrust the stake into the giant’s eye, and Alexi reveals his adolescent, rather than child age:

“You did a good job up there,” he said quietly. “How old are you really, boy?” I was about to protest when I realized that he must know already. “Fifteen. I’m small for my age.” He grunted. “I thought so. No twelve year old could do that. Not many adults either.” He rubbed his chin through his beard. “My own son Telemachus must be nearly your age. Why did you lie?”

Lopex nodded. "Your sharp tongue does you no good. But I was right to keep you. You keep thinking in a crisis when most men panic, and you've got the healer's touch. You're too useful to lose, Alexi."  
I looked sideways at him, feeling an unexpected warmth on my face. In the gloom, his silhouette reminded me again of my father.'  
(2011: 175-6)

Thus far, Alexi has deliberately played a child role: his ability to masquerade as a younger boy had prevented him from being killed in Troy. Lopex is the only one to see through this deceit, but whilst he acknowledges Alexi's greater ability because of his age, the young protagonist remains a child figure. In comparing Alexi to Telemachus, Bowman not only reinforced the bond between Alexi and Lopex, but also the 'otherness' of Alexi as a child. As these two examples have demonstrated, the familial image is used recurrently in passages where Alexi receives validation from Lopex – which is most commonly as a result of Alexi's actions on the course of the adventures. The adventures are both the tests of Lopex and of the *Bildungsroman* of Alexi: at these points of crisis in the *Odyssey*, where Alexi's safety is threatened, Lopex becomes an explicitly paternal figure. As such, on the course of the voyage, Lopex's moral integrity and personal strength are emphasized:

'I want you all to know whatever happens...I have been proud to command you. Whatever dangers we may find, you will face them with courage and fortitude. I will expect nothing less.' (2011: 136)

As a parental figure, Lopex also takes on a pedagogical role – demonstrating the moral uprightness and leadership that had been so central to the nineteenth-century *Odysseys* for children. In this vein, Alexi proves to be physically adept, as illustrated in his role in the blinding of Polyphemus, and his medical knowledge is invaluable, but these are innate abilities: the true marker of his maturation is self-restraint – a lesson made explicit by Lopex who gives him repeated warnings to keep his tongue. These words do not sink in until after they have gone unheeded – demarcating the gap between adulthood and adolescence through relative experience and wisdom. Such episodes also lead Alexi to self-reflection:

'That tongue of yours is going to get you in a lot of trouble. Lopex had foreseen this. Why couldn't I control myself?' (2011: 116)



The adult Lopex, famed for his measured words, can control himself in a way that the adolescent Alexi cannot: Lopex's mastery of words represents the mastery of adulthood. Alexi's recognition of his own lack of mastery is part of the process that sees him accept the need for Lopex's control for his own benefit, and the warning made is one that directly challenges Alexi's unwillingness to conform. Reynolds (summarizing Trites) recognizes that part of the role of adolescent fiction is to express the need 'to accept limits on power as part of acquiring an adult identity' (2007: 72).

The process of accepting this limited power involves the acceptance of Lopex himself, as the dominant adult figure in Alexi's life. It becomes increasingly difficult for Alexi to remind himself of Lopex's role in the destruction of his home city, as Bowman makes evident on the island of the Cyclopes:

"Wake up. You're the stealthiest. Go and fetch some grapes from the baskets... Would you prefer to go back to drudge work? Every skill has its price, Alexias"

As I crept to the front of the cave, I felt a warmth spreading through me. He'd called me Alexias. I wondered for a moment what Mela would have thought of him, then stopped in my tracks. Mela would have reminded me that he was a Greek barbarian, one of the horde who had murdered our father and destroyed our city. I frowned, wondering why that seemed so hard to remember.' (2011: 178-9)

Alexi's subaltern status also becomes a part of this process of accepting his limits of power: his fading characterization of Lopex as 'the enemy' at an emotional level begins the dissolving of the picture Bowman had established via Alexi for the reader in the early part of the first book. At the same time, the unique power of the child perspective is highlighted in Alexi's consideration of what his sister Melantha (Mela) would think of Lopex: at nineteen, she is adult by modern standards, and the rigidity of her imagined impression of Lopex, is because of her own adult status. Though Alexi raises doubt about Lopex several times throughout the books, it is always in a way that casts doubt on the veracity of the implications. The forgetting of Lopex's origins is repeated throughout the series – it is a sentiment repeated after Alexi buries Pen (Elpenor, who dies in *Od.* 10.553-60 and meets Odysseus as a ghost in *Od.* 11.60-83), and Lopex praises him for doing the moral thing ('I couldn't forget that he was one of the Greek commanders who had destroyed Troy. He made it so easy to hate him. So why did I find it so hard?' 2013: 121-2).

The unraveling of Greek and Trojan identities opens up Alexi's own identity and self-conception. The apparent conflict that Alexi suffers when he considers Lopex is written in such a way that characterizes Lopex positively, both rationally (in terms of Alexi's thought processes) and emotionally (in his instinctive feeling towards him). At the beginning of book two, which charts the events of the *Odyssey* between the kingdom of Aeolus and the island of the Cattle of the Sun, Alexi is proud to have been recognized by Lopex:

'I was pleased that he'd included me [as part of a delegation]. Officially, I was just a slave, and a boy besides, but since I'd proven myself as a healer, and again while fighting the Cyclops, Lopex had begun to see me as something more. My chest puffed out a bit at the thought.' (2013: 3)

The consequence of the paternal characterization of Lopex becomes apparent when we briefly meet Alexi's real father in the Underworld. In this meeting, Lopex's authority is emphasized rather than undermined. Lopex and Alexi's father are not just paralleled through Alexi's eyes: whilst Lopex is renowned for his craft and skill, Bowman created a similarly resourceful figure in Alexi's father, who was renowned by both Greeks and Trojans as a healer (he passes his knowledge of medicinal remedies to his son). Bowman has written Lopex as a father figure, and a father as Odyssean. Alexi's father directly echoes Lopex's earlier opinion on Alexi's potential utility and his advice:

'So you're a slave now?' I nodded. "At least you're alive. If you want to survive, make yourself as useful as you can, perhaps as a healer's boy. And for Athene's sake, Alexi, *try* not to talk back.' (2013: 113)

This advice from Alexi's father confirms the trust that has been built in the reader concerning Lopex. The parental role played by Odysseus supersedes the Greek/Trojan divide that Bowman began with: the series which could have given a critical account of Odysseus from a subaltern position ultimately finds common ground with him. The young Alexi grows to approve of, and seek approval from Lopex.<sup>137</sup> By reconciling Alexi

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<sup>137</sup> Sulari Gentill's *Chasing Odysseus* provides an unusual example in that there is a consistent antagonism towards Odysseus throughout. Still, it remains much easier to provide examples of reconciliation to the text that consistent hostility – though work by Gentill (and to a certain extent, as I shall explore in the next section, Tracy Barrett) perhaps suggests an emerging direction which is increasingly antagonistic to Odysseus and/or the *Odyssey*).

to Lopex, the author has used this relationship to promote the favourable impression of Odysseus advocated by the *Odyssey*. By imbuing Lopex with parental qualities, the young reader is directed by Bowman to view him with authority.

As part of Alexi's maturation, Bowman tests Alexi's relationship with Lopex using the Odyssean adventures. In addition to being blamed for the release of the winds from the bag provided by Aeolus (*Od.* 10.46–9), Alexi's fear that his bond with Lopex is not secure comes to light when they face the Sirens. The Homeric account focuses on the promise of knowledge that the Sirens make to Odysseus:

'...for we know everything that the Argives and Trojans did and suffered in wide Troy through the gods' despite.' (*Od.* 12.189–90)

In Bowman's novels, Alexi's ears are stuffed with wax – as he cannot hear it, the song itself becomes unimportant – but he is in close proximity to Lopex, whose words he can make out. Instead, the account becomes a power struggle between Lopex and Alexi, with Lopex trying to persuade Alexi to untie him from the mast by promising him first that he will resume his position as Alexi's master, then saying he will persuade Ury to free Alexi, before threatening him:

'Lopex's voice rose as the last of his self-control vanished.  
"Do it now boy!" he shouted, straining at the cords, his eyes bulging.  
"Or I'll make your final days short and full of pain!" His face contorted further as I fidgeted "You stinking Trojan scum! Do it! Now! I should have let Ury cut out your heart back in Troy, you little filth!"  
So that was how he really felt. Could anyone blame me now if I cut him loose?' (2013: 131).

In the *Odyssey*, Odysseus can only signal with his eyebrows that he wants to be released (*Od.* 12.194). Bowman instead imagines an alternative version of the scenario to play on the childish fear of abandonment or rejection by having Lopex revert to notions of nationality and 'otherness' in order to antagonize young Alexi. The boy, who is unable to experience the song of the Sirens, is ignorant of its effects, and the worldliness the song represents. As such, he is unable to interpret properly Lopex's response, and assumes that the insults delivered by Lopex are the truth – but Bowman suggests to his reader that this is not necessarily the case, from the notable change in Lopex's tone, and his favoritism towards Alexi up to this point.

In the third book of the series – *Arrow Through the Axes* – Alexi is separated from Lopex after the storm of *Od.* 12.399–420, for as Bowman recognizes (2014a), it would not be sufficiently entertaining or pedagogically correct for Alexi to be stranded with Odysseus on Calypso’s island. Instead, Alexi has his own Circe-esque experience when he is entrapped and drugged by Phaethusia, a daughter of Helios whom he had met previously. Her sister Lampethia helps him to escape: he meets a stranded Greek cargo ship, and persuades them not to eat the cattle (a deliberate parallel to the central action of the *Odyssey* by Bowman, as noted in his blog (2014a)). He is then taken to Mycenae (where he learns about the death of Agamemnon and meets Electra and Orestes), before eventually encountering Telemachus in Sparta, who brings him back to Ithaca. This narrative, Bowman 2014a acknowledges, was partly informed by his own sister, Laurel Bowman, a professor of Classics at the University of Victoria, who had introduced him to the *Nostoi* as summarized by Proclus: indicating a use of wider epic narratives to justify his own diversions from the Homeric poem. Even where the narrative is forced by its own constraints to diverge from the traditional Odyssean adventures, the author finds a way to mirror it, as novel insertions are deemed ‘awkward’ and ‘contrived’ (Bowman 2014a).

Alexi realizes that Telemachus is Lopex’s son, and is careful not to reveal knowledge of Lopex, as it would give away his Trojan origins and enslavement. The remaining events on Ithaca play out along the lines of the *Odyssey*: but the resolution is not found only in terms of plot. Given the earlier abandonment of Alexi to Ury, Alexi is nervous that Lopex would recognize him. However, the moment just before the battle in the hall sees an instant reconciliation:

‘As if [Odysseus] could tell I was watching him, he turned his head to the side momentarily, and one eyelid pinched shut, just for an instant. He knew me! At his glance, the warmth I had once felt for him came flooding back, and suddenly I knew whose side I had always been on’ (2014: 187).

The subtle and instinctive mutual understanding between pseudo-parent and child characters is crystallized by Alexi’s final, and open admission to himself. Alexi reveals that he had ‘always been on’ the side of Odysseus – but in fact, this is a revelation of Bowman’s attitude to the *Odyssey*. Bowman even formalizes the relationship between his two protagonists at the end, where Lopex tells Alexi:

“Alexi, you have served me well. You’re welcome to stay in my house, or what’s left of it, for as long as you like. Not as a slave, or even as a servant, but as a guest, equal in status to my own son.” (2014: 197)

Given what we know about other Homeric homecomings, and the sometimes erotic elements to these stories (e.g. the homecoming of Agamemnon with Cassandra), this passage has the potential to be read in light of a suppressed erotic narrative, but this is never made explicit in the relationship between Alexi and Odysseus. Instead, Telemachus, describes having seen a girl on an island with eyes like Alexi’s, whom he is obviously attracted to (‘She was gorgeous!’ 2014:198). This prompts Alexi to realize that this could be his sister, Melantha, and the very end of the book recounts the reunion of the siblings, with Alexi noticing that Telemachus was now the son of a king, and ‘a good match for any woman’. Melantha, who has been very capable of defending herself against two young men she thought were Greek intruders, mellows when Telemachus tells her that he barely knew his father, and she takes his hand. The strong implication being that Telemachus will be romantically linked, and likely married to Melantha. By shifting the eroticism of the bringing home of a foreign woman from Odysseus to Telemachus, Bowman has avoided further problematizing Odysseus as a adulterer, especially given his recent restoration to kingship in the narrative.

Alexi and Lopex’s relationship illustrates how, as Reynolds 2007: 72 argues, that adolescent fiction portrays ‘the trajectory of adolescence’ as a ‘movement from feelings of isolation/alienation accompanied by distaste for the status quo, to a sense of acceptance and willingness to invest in the very social structures that gave rise to the original sense of critical detachment’. Alexi’s development throughout the books – from reluctant admiration of Lopex to the fear of rejection – reflects this model, which crucially has distinct implications for the relationship between adult, child, and the *Odyssey*. Bowman has exploited the *Odyssey* for its ability to resonate with the tropes of young adult literature, but underneath this relationship, he also has much to say about the *Odyssey*. As an orphan, it is the pseudo-adoptive relationship Alexi has with Odysseus that enables his maturation – which itself involves not only reconciliation with Odysseus as a Greek, but for the reader, of his version of events. However, Alexi’s adventures, by their own creative limits, are not a direct image of the Homeric ones. The author wrote in response to parents who had criticized him for changing the *Odyssey*,

which they felt (in his words) was ‘as blasphemous as changing the bible [sic]. (Never mind that there are at least fifty English language versions of the bible [sic] out there.)’ (2014a). Bowman responded:

*‘I haven’t changed the Odyssey. Or at least, very little. Truth is, I’ve taken great pains not to change the stuff that’s already there. And believe me, it wasn’t easy! What I have done, cheerfully and without apology, is add new stuff woven around the original... Not contradicting the Odyssey [sic], you understand ... just extending it.’*  
(2014b)

This blog entry reveals Bowman’s true hand, and admits to his conscious heteroglossic influence: in *Odysseus* he has represented the Homeric poem, and in *Alexi*, he has reconciled his child readers to it. By referring to the numerous versions of the Bible, he appears to claim a similar freedom for the *Odyssey*: by claiming he hasn’t changed the *Odyssey*, he means he has not changed the narrative features. Yet, as previous generations have shown, the replication of the narrative alone has not always been considered substantive in children’s versions of the poem. The fact that Bowman can confidently make such a statement reveals that he is working on the precedent set by Lamb over two centuries earlier – that the narrative of the *Odyssey*, and the adventure-driven narrative was the fundamental essence of the poem. What initially appears to be a highly subversive take on the poem ultimately makes use not just of the now conservative association of the *Odyssey* with adventure as a means of delivering an authorial message, but the notion that the Homeric poem, and its positive characterization of the protagonist, remain the authoritative voice in the story.

A brief exploration of one final work, Tracy Barrett’s *King of Ithaka*, takes the recurring themes and structures of young adult literature and poses a different invitation: to consider the *Odyssey* as erroneous, and fundamentally unrepresentative of Odysseus and his relationship with his family. Barrett’s work offers a less direct relationship with the adventures of the *Odyssey*, and in this aspect appears to be closer to *Ithaka* than *Torn from Troy* in using other parts of the poem as its inspiration. Crucially, it offers a much more hostile treatment of Odysseus and his adventures. As the final case study for the chapter, it illustrates how through the invocation of the notion of a corrupt Homeric text, the *Odyssey* for children becomes more open for

interpretation than ever before, while insisting at the same time that the reader is made aware that this work is not the *Odyssey*.

In Barrett's novel, Odyssean children's narratives come full circle from Fénelon, elevating Telemachus' perspective, and reimagining his voyage to Pylos and Sparta. Although amenable on their first encounter, Nestor and Pisistratos are hostile to Telemachus, with Pisistratos abandoning him on the road to Sparta after stealing Telemachus' stash of iron. Nestor then attempts to kill Telemachus when he comes back to Pylos on his route home. Barrett's cruel Nestor is the first hint of the undercurrent to the novel: that the *Odyssey* represents an adult's version of events, an adult culture, which is inherently deceitful. Homer is portrayed as the bard of Nestor's court, having been forced to stay there, as Pisistratos explains to Telemachus:

“What happened to his eyes?”

He took a swig of wine and wiped the back of his hand across his mouth, leaving a red streak on his knuckles. “Oh,” he said. “My father put them out.”

“Why?” I was unable to hide my shock.

“To keep him here. A blind singer can't travel far, and my father was unwilling to share him!” (2010: 144–5)

This presentation of Homer is the first significant tool in creating a narrative that provides a rationale for the ever-increasing deviations from the Homeric narrative (to which I return below). Nestor, who is immortalized as the hospitable elder of the Homeric poems becomes the very antithesis of a good guest-host, and betrays the son of his friend. This episode acts as a kind of prototype for the more shocking revelation at the end of the novel. When Telemachus arrives home, he is confronted with the reappearance of his father, whom he has idealized but feels abandoned by, only to discover from Penelope and Eurycleia that Odysseus is not welcome: he was abusive and cruel to them.

‘She told me about what she called my father's brutality, about his heavy hand with her, with my mother, even – they feared – with me when I was grown older. She told me how my grandfather had been terrified of my father, but in the fog of his old age he had forgotten how harshly his son had treated him. In the way of old people, he remembered only the best parts of his life.

“You've always told me that he was brave and strong and generous–”

“He was. But did you ever hear me say he was kind? Or that he was loving?” (2010: 232)

Like Klymene, and Alexi, it is the child protagonist Telemachus who exposes the ‘reality’ behind the *Odyssey*. Whether unintentionally, protectively, or maliciously, the adults in Telemachus’ life have allowed him to put his faith in an untrue version of his father – and by extension, Barrett hints that readers with pre-existing knowledge of the poem should be open to criticising the literature that is put in front of them. In order to do this, Barrett dissects the character of Odysseus – and in particular the nineteenth-century characterisation of him, which focused on his bravery, strength and virtue. Barrett illustrates how such values jar with the modern world, and implies that a good parent is not simply a unilateral role model, but morally upright from all perspectives. The *Odyssey* is then used to support this characterisation, in particular, the slaughter of the suitors, which is focalized by Telemachus:

‘But to shoot unarmed men, guests at his table, invited or not, and heavy with wine – was this the act of a king?’ (2010: 246)

Following his own attempted assassination in Pylos, Telemachus can now apply this experience – and the morality of guest-friendship – to his own judgement. The confrontation with the reality of the adults in the novel results in the pinnacle of Telemachus’ maturation. His own adventures give him the strength and bravery to be able to confront Odysseus upon the latter’s return, marking his independence. Empowered, Telemachus directs Odysseus to leave: complying, Odysseus disappears on the second voyage that Tiresias predicts in the Homeric poem.

The most revealing passage of Barrett’s tale is the afterword, as it claims the events of the *Odyssey* were artificial. A mature Telemachus speculates on his own voyage and the rumours of the eventual fate of his father:

“The Pylia bard Homeros composed a strange and lovely song about my search for my father and his return to Ithaka... In Homeros’ version of the tale, his patron’s son, Pisistratos, was my good and loyal friend and helper. He said that I returned from Sparta to Ithaka all in one day, and that my father and I slaughtered twenty or thirty men instead of the one that Odysseus killed alone. But I don’t mind. It’s a better story the way Homeros tells it, and people like good stories.’ (2010: 260)



The number of 'corrections' made by Barrett – whether of character, of detail, or of plot, all call the *Odyssey* into question. However, by implication, they also shed light on the events that are not directly covered by Barrett's novel: Odysseus' adventures. Barrett takes the space around the words of the *Odyssey*, and draws a narrative in the gaps that shed new light on the authority of the poem.

The questionability of Odysseus and the entire account of the *Odyssey* means that the reader is encouraged to doubt the veracity of the adventures, which is supported by their fantastic nature, which contrasts with the grit and realism intended by Barrett. The 'Pylian' Homeros creates his poetry under duress, and his self-preservation leads to the positive portrayal of Nestor and Pisistratos. Yet at the same time, in this afterword, Barrett reveals that she was not attempting to undermine the *Odyssey* as a literary creation. In fact, the character that has most reason to be hostile to the song of Odysseus' fame – Telemachus – is happy to spread the poem further, and accept the 'better story'. Telemachus, as an adult in the afterword, considers his father's story differently when he has his own son. Speaking of Homeros' story, which still focuses on the adventures, he says:

'Polydora won't allow these stories to be told in our children's hearing. She says they should grow up without learning lies. I acquiesce to this, since she rules in the home, as is correct. But when Brax and Damon and I meet...I sometimes bring my oldest boy with me, and we tell him about his grandfather who blinded a Kyklops and heard the Sirens sing and used his wits to return to his well-loved family.' (2010: 261)

Barrett uses the gendered space of the home to suggest the means by which the *Odyssey* began to be transmitted. Polydora's role as moral guardian of both boys and girls, and the weight given to her control of the home seem more reminiscent of the nineteenth-century 'Barbauld crew' that Lamb had complained of, than of what we know about the gender-segregated education of children in ancient Greece (Beaumont 2013: 198–204 Dillon 2013: 404–13): like Geras' Klymene and Penelope, her preoccupation is with truth, rather than 'stories'. Within the formal settings of their home, the *Odyssey* is not transmitted by women, despite Polydora herself playing a significant role in Telemachus' own travels. It is only outside of the house, in the company of centaurs, that Telemachus passes on the story of his father to his son,

reflecting on the particular fantastic associations and masculine prestige afforded to the poem. This is still a male story, but further, it has become one that is told by male parents to male children. Telemachus' own maturation means that he has become part of promoting the falsehoods of his father's story: upholding the *Odyssey* as an adult narrative. In fact, Barrett suggests to her reader not to take her own story too seriously – as Telemachus reflects on his father's fate:

'I never learned my father's fate. Bards have sung that he and his men sailed through the Pillars of Herakles and disappeared into the ocean to the west. Others have said that he changed his mind about his glorious expedition, and, being disgusted with the sea, he vowed to travel inland until he found a place where no man had even heard of it. He carried an oar, these bards say, and when a farmer, not recognizing his burden, asked what he was doing with that strange winnowing fan, he drove it into the ground as the corner post of a new house. Either of these stories may be true, or neither. It doesn't really matter. Sometimes it's best to believe a poet's lies. And now my tale is told.' (2010: 260–1)

Barrett acknowledges the centrifugal possibilities of the *Odyssey* from inside and outside of the poem – including the famous future voyage of Odysseus, as related by Tiresias in *Od.* 11.119–37. Whilst this passage focuses on the future of Odysseus beyond both the novel, and the Homeric poem, it also invites speculation on Barrett's position concerning the *Odyssey* more broadly. By advising her readers that 'Sometimes it's best to believe a poet's lies', Barrett, who has taken the most outwardly antagonistic approach to the Homeric poem, reveals her didactic hand when Telemachus denies that the truth matters, and implies that the version created by Homeros not only of the future travels of Odysseus, but of his past adventures, is superior. Whilst the process of questioning the *Odyssey* has been regarded as a centrifugal exercise, the adventures of the *Odyssey* in children's literature actually exert a centripetal crosscurrent – 'unifying, centralizing, homogenizing, and hierarchizing' (Peradotto 2002: 63), as a result of the didactic impetus of using a canonical text for recreational purposes. In writing *King of Ithaka*, Barrett, until the point of the epilogue, had come closest to crossing over beyond the adventures of Odysseus – only minimally acknowledging Odysseus, and giving little prestige to either him or his accomplishments. However, Barrett's epilogue orientates the reader towards the Homeric poem itself. Deferentially praising the superior storytelling of the *Odyssey*, even Telemachus, who was so unforgiving of his father's

actions, continues to tell his son of Odysseus' adventures. The author herself has imagined a story beyond the *Odyssey*, defied it even, but ultimately capitulated to its cultural status – a gesture that itself has classical precedence: Statius' *Thebaid* 12. 810–9 features a similar apparent statement of deference at the end, which notionally attempts to defuse criticism but ultimately draws attention to what has been achieved by the author's 'straying' from the hypotext.

Barrett lends us one final useful image: Odysseus' passage through the Pillars of Hercules becomes a conscious metaphor for the process of writing around the *Odyssey* for children in the twenty-first century. The episode made famous by Dante's *Inferno* sees Odysseus in an act of transgression when he crosses over the boundary:

'And I and my companions were already  
old and slow, when we approached the narrows  
where Hercules set up his boundary stones  
that men might heed and never reach beyond...'  
(26.106–9, trans. Mandelbaum)

According to this passage, to venture beyond what is known can lead only to the disruption of a natural order, but modern children's writers strive to push the boundaries. The poem has stood in the place of the Pillars of Hercules – a monument which Geras, Bowman and Barrett have acknowledged demands recognition. All three authors have presented the *Odyssey* itself in a way more typical of protagonists in young adult literature – as Reynolds 2007: 72 describes, with an "authentic" but hidden inner self, and a 'false' public self'. The idea of revealing the truth of the events behind the poem sees these authors as they imagine venturing beyond the pillars to the authentic reality of Homeric life but being forced to capitulate to the public self of the *Odyssey*, and their own literary public, adults and children alike.

## Conclusion

When Aristotle summarized the *Odyssey* in *Poetics* 1455b17–23, he presented a picture of the poem very far from the versions written for children that this thesis explored:

‘A man is absent from home many years, he is watched by Poseidon, and isolated; moreover, affairs at home are such that his property is consumed by suitors, and his son conspired against; but he returns after shipwreck, allows some people to recognise him, and launches an attack which brings his own survival and his enemies’ destruction. That is the essential core; the rest is episodes.’ (trans. Halliwell)

The *Odyssey* is defined by Aristotle not according to Odysseus’ adventures, or its fantastic qualities: instead, his description recalls the proportions of the Homeric poem and privileges its end. In Book 13, Odysseus has already returned to Ithaca, and the parts of the poem highlighted – the reacquisition of power over his household and kingdom by means of mass-slaughter – happen in the second half of the Homeric poem. According to Aristotle’s view, the brutality of the poem is its ‘essential core’: not only the death of the suitors, but the destruction of his ‘enemies’, including, say, the mutilation of Melanthius (*Od.* 22.474–77), and the deaths of the maids (their feet ‘twitched a little, but not for long’ *Od.* 22.473) – episodes that, needless to say, do not feature in versions for children. These episodes are not comfortable for readers of any age – but the particular anxiety provoked by the notion of exposing children to such extremes of revenge creates an impetus to edify that has had significant and enduring consequences for the reception of the *Odyssey*.

In this thesis, I have brought to light the methods and interventions of children’s authors engaging with the *Odyssey*, who have responded not only to these uncomfortable issues, but the poem more broadly. Fénelon’s *The Adventures of Telemachus* revealed how the first literary version of the *Odyssey* for children was only too conscious of the brutality of the Odyssean world, but also the strength of contemporary didactic impulses; a sense of wonder tempered by the tutor’s voice. Lamb’s *The Adventures of Ulysses* redefined the way in which subsequent generations would think about the *Odyssey* – switching the focus to the travels of Odysseus, and creating an adventure story designed to resonate with a young audience. The initially

hesitant critical reception of the work highlights the dramatic turnaround in perceptions by the end of the nineteenth century, where Lamb's work had become a paradigmatic text, a classic in its own right (and, indeed, by then hardly distinguishable from the original Homeric classic). Lamb's disruption of the presentation of the Homeric poem continues to be influential in the present day, where extreme 'revisionist' texts respond not so much to the *Odyssey* itself, but to a nineteenth-century idea of the poem. In many ways, these reversions appear to be a symptom of a wider cultural reaction to the nineteenth-century preoccupation with authority and propriety: they claim to be alternative readings of the ancient poem, but in reality the 'original' they are so reliant on is not the ancient *Odyssey*, but an understanding of the poem that was made possible by Lamb's adventure-centric narrative.

To return to Nina Bawden's words at the opening of this thesis, it is clear that the real 'dangerous creatures' who prove the greatest threat to the *Odyssey* in children's literary versions, are adults. In their concern for what children will read, and how children will interpret their writing, children's authors and adult readers have reconfigured the understanding of the poem both within and outside of scholarship: by drawing attention to the adventures of Odysseus, they have used the fantastic episodes of the *Odyssey* to promote their own literary, social, and political agendas. The meaning of the poem has not been uniform across time, and children's authors have not taken a passive or inconsequential role in the transmission of the *Odyssey*. This is significant for understanding the wider cultural influence of the *Odyssey* – for many people, children's books represent the only literary encounter with the poem– and has had an important, but not often recognised influence on classical scholarship too. If Lamb's narrative is an operative foundation for children's versions of the *Odyssey* in the present day, then those who read versions of the *Odyssey* as children carry this reception before meeting the Homeric poem in its entirety – this is equally true of Joyce and of professional classical scholars, of course. Awareness of Lamb's influence has diminished over the past two centuries, and simultaneously children's literature and the study of children's literature, have remained marginal in academia. I hope that I have made the case that the engagements with the *Odyssey* considered in this thesis, far from being marginal, need to be brought to the core of classics, so that we know what we bring to the ancient poem even as we supposedly read it 'for the first time'.

Apart from seeking to explain the focus on adventure in nineteenth-, twentieth- and twenty-first century approaches to the *Odyssey*, this study aims to contribute to future scholarship on the reception of classical literature in children's literature. One foray into the *Iliad* in children's culture has been made by Rachel Bryant Davies' 2011 thesis on Troy and Carthage in the long nineteenth century, but there is room for more systematic literary exploration, and for a comparative study between the receptions of the two Homeric poems. The concordance of the *Odyssey* with the development of children's literature, and the long-established belief that it appeals to children has been established in this thesis, but the more obvious and recognised brutality of the *Iliad* suggests a fundamentally different presentation in literature aimed at children. The parameters and theoretical grounding of this study would also be relevant to studies of children's versions and reversions of other epics – such as the *Aeneid*, or the *Argonautica*. The respective influences of compendia of myth for children and mythography more broadly upon children's literature would also warrant further exploration, as these shorter tales are more readily accessible than some of the texts explored here. Further still, the thesis contributes to the emerging discourse on classics and children's literature by illustrating that we must not treat the field purely on a text-by-text, or context-by-context basis, but rather as a field that is intrinsically connected to wider literary, scholarly, and social networks. As a result of this connection, children's literature can be brought from the fringes of literary scholarship to the centre of discussions of medium and genre, as studies of classics and children's literature illustrate the distinctive qualities but increasingly permeable nature of these categories (most notably with young adult literature). By disengaging from the idea that the *Odyssey* has a natural role as a tale for children, we can re-examine not only our approaches to children's literature, and wider receptions of the Homeric poem, but also the *Odyssey* itself.